National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

NL-339 (r. 88/04) c

Canada

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

THE AESTHETIC CONCEPTION OF THE ACTOR/AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP IN THE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS OF LUGNÉ-POE 1893-1897

BY

DANIEL DICKSON

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE

OF MASTER OF ARTS

DEPARTMENT OF DRAMA

EDMONTON, ALBERTA

SPRING 1990

National Library of Canada
Bibliothèque nationale du Canada

Canadian Theses Service
Service des thèses canadiennes

Ottawa, Canada
K1A 0N4

NOTICE

The quality of this microform is heavily dependent upon the quality of the original thesis submitted for microfilming. Every effort has been made to ensure the highest quality of reproduction possible.

If pages are missing, contact the university which granted the degree.

Some pages may have indistinct print especially if the original pages were typed with a poor typewriter ribbon or if the university sent us an inferior photocopy.

Reproduction in full or in part of this microform is governed by the Canadian Copyright Act, R.S.C. 1970, c. C-30, and subsequent amendments.

AVIS

La qualité de cette microforme dépend grandement de la qualité de la thèse soumise au microfilmage. Nous avons tout fait pour assurer une qualité supérieure de reproduction.

S'il manque des pages, veuillez communiquer avec l'université qui a conféré le grade.

La qualité d'impression de certaines pages peut laisser à désirer, surtout si les pages originales ont été dactylographiées à l'aide d'un ruban usé ou si l'université nous a fait parvenir une photocopie de qualité inférieure.

La reproduction, même partielle, de cette microforme est soumise à la Loi canadienne sur le droit d'auteur, SRC 1970, c. C-30, et ses amendements subséquents.

ISBN 0-315-60147-7

NL-339 (r. 88/04) c

Canada

Imprimerie
F. PAILLART
Edition

86, Chaussée Marcadé 80103 ABBEVILLE cedex
Boite postale 109 • 22.24.22.18

Abbeville, le 25 avril 1990

Monsieur Daniel DICKSON
3438 Prud'homme

Montréal, Québec
CANADA H4A 3H4

F.P./J.L.

Monsieur,

Suite à votre lettre du 7 avril, nous vous autorisons à reproduire dans votre thèse le dessin de la page 57 (fig.5) du volume "Le Texte et la Scène" édité par nous mêmes en 1978.

Veuillez agréer, Monsieur, l'expression de nos sentiments les meilleurs.

Frédéric PAILLART,

THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

RELEASE FORM

NAME OF AUTHOR: DANIEL DICKSON

TITLE OF THESIS: THE AESTHETIC CONCEPTION OF THE ACTOR/AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP IN THE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS OF LUGNÉ-POE 1893-1897

DEGREE: MASTER OF ARTS

YEAR THIS DEGREE GRANTED: 1990

Permission is hereby granted to THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA LIBRARY to reproduce single copies of this thesis and to lend or sell such copies for private, scholarly or scientific research purposes only.

The author reserves other publication rights, and neither the thesis nor extensive extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's written permission.

Daniel Dickson

(Student's signature)

3438 Prud'homme
Montreal, Quebec, Canada
H4A 3H4

Date: April 25, 1990

UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled THE AESTHETIC CONCEPTION OF THE ACTOR/AUDIENCE RELATIONSHIP IN THE THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS OF LUGNÉ-POE BETWEEN 1893-1897 submitted by DANIEL DICKSON in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF ARTS.

Cheryl L. Stechishin
(Supervisor)
James V. DiFelice

Date: April 11, 1990

Dedication

To Dr. John Terfloth, for making the past come alive for me;

To Dr. Mary Blackstone, for teaching me what good research is really about; and

To Mr. John Harold and Mrs. Amparo Dickson, for understanding, support and love.

Abstract

This thesis postulates an underlying esthetic conception of the actor/audience relationship at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre under Lugné-Poe, during the period when Lugné was strongly influenced by theatrical Symbolism. It examines Lugné's interpretative staging techniques of exemplary productions from the perspective of Symbolist esthetic precepts.

The esthetic relationship between the actor and the audience in non-Realistic theatre such as Symbolism has received little attention by today's theatre scholars and practitioners. The history of association with the Symbolist movement by Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre justifies their examination from the viewpoint of Symbolist esthetics.

Symbolism developed partly in reaction to certain principles of early Realistic and Naturalistic theatre: the exclusion of supernatural/metaphysical elements from drama and the detailed simulation of "real-world" environments and human relationships on stage.

Symbolism was part of a general rejection of empirical realism in art which was called Idealism. This philosophy contributed important precepts to Symbolist drama: the perception of the universe as essentially mysterious and the ideal of several artforms being "synthesized" into one unified stage production. Symbolism's origin as poetry prompted its playwrights to use non-realistic sounds and rhythms in their language in order to convey the playwright's insights evocatively

rather than descriptively. Symbolists believed that this evocation should be a unifying, communal experience for the audience similar to that of classical Greek drama and of traditional Christian church services.

While the Symbolists believed all performance arts should be synthesized as part of the whole, they also believed the non-verbal arts should be minimized so as not to "distract" from the playwright's personal vision as embodied in his language. Examination of Lugné-Poe's productions at the Oeuvre indicates that Lugné did adhere to the principles of minimization, synthesis and evocation in his use of sets, costumes and technical effects.

Minimized settings and technical effects left the actor as the primary vehicle for conveying the playwright's message to the audience. Lugné-Poe's actors attempted to respond instinctively to the "deeper meaning" implied in certain lines of a play. The actors manifested this quality primarily through a stylized "chanting" or "singing" speech pattern.

The ideal Symbolist actor/audience esthetic would have been achieved when both the actors, and through them the audience, were united in a deeply affective emotional/spiritual response to a play. The Oeuvre was at least partially successful at achieving that response. The Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's characteristic vocal "style" was not used uniformly in all productions, but was applied consistently by being selectively "intensified" for scenes possessing particularly symbolic or evocative qualities.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Introduction	1
	Defining an Actor/Audience Esthetic	1
	Career of Lugné-Poe	3
	Symbolism at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre	7
	Thesis Statement and Methodology	9
I.	Theatrical Realism as Opposed by Symbolism	14
	Symbolist Reaction Against Realism	14
	Origins of Realism	15
	Precursors to Realism	16
	Realism and Naturalism: Theory	19
	Realism and Naturalism: Practice	23
	Summary	25
II.	Symbolist Precepts Influencing Play Production	28
	The Idealist Movement	28
	Symbolism as Poetry	31
	Symbolism as Drama	33
	Summary	39
III.	Performance Environment	43
	Practical Limitations of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre	43
	Audiences at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre	46
	Sets and Costumes: Theory and Practice	48

TABLE OF CONTENTS (cont'd.)

CHAPTER PAGE

III. Performance Environment (cont'd.)

Light, Sound and Spectacle 53

Effect on the Actor. 57

Summary. 60

IV. Symbolism in Performance 66

Focus on the Actor 66

Characterization 69

Actor Technique. 76

Conclusion 85

WORKS CITED. 92

APPENDIX A: PROGRAMS OF THE OEUVRE, 1893-97 97

APPENDIX B: FIGURES AND PLATES. 101

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE PAGE

1. Playing-spaces in Intérieur 102
2. Lugné-Poe's costume as John Rosmer in Rosmersholm 103

LIST OF PLATES

PLATE		PAGE
1.	Location of theatres for performances of representative plays	104
2.	Paul Sérusier, program for L'Intruse by Maurice Maeterlinck, 1891 at the Théâtre d'Art	105

Introduction

Defining an Actor/Audience Esthetic

The question of what is "beautiful" has always been integral to art, including the performing arts. Despite such universal concern, different definitions have held sway throughout history as to what exactly constitutes beauty in art. This should not be surprising, since the appreciation of beauty is among the most subjective of human responses. Left purely to individual taste, the discipline of esthetics would quickly disintegrate into dispute over personal likes or dislikes. This does not occur because various schools of thought have attempted to define what constitutes art, setting limits on technique, subject matter, and other elements involved in its creation. Most of these schools have given at least equal importance to other functions of art than the creation of beauty: presentation of moral parables, or religious adoration, or the provocation of intense emotional responses in the audience, or strict adherence to structural rules. In some cases such considerations are synonymous with a given philosophy of "beauty". This has been especially true of drama, with its ability to articulate beliefs and values and to present them through clear and memorable images.

Whether or not a given artistic movement consciously espouses some objective other than creation of the beautiful, the existence of an

artistic philosophy implies some systemization of esthetics -- some universal standards by which the esthetic success of a particular work may be judged. In the field of drama -- theatre, film or television -- the contemporary Western world is still largely dominated by the school of "Realism". While many departures from and variations on Realism continue to take place, it remains the most popular and widespread dramatic form in Western Europe and particularly North America. The characteristics of Realistic drama, especially during its beginnings in the nineteenth century, are very important to the topic of this thesis and are defined and explored in Chapter I; for the moment let us consider only the esthetics of Realism. One esthetic element in modern Realistic drama is essential to its successful presentation: that of the relationship of actor to audience. In a Realistic performance the actor creates a character with whom the majority of his audience can identify, either because the character is drawn from a familiar background, exhibits common traits of behaviour, reacts to a given situation in a readily-understandable fashion, or some combination of these factors. Thus the audience member is able to identify with the character and the conflicts he or she faces within the play. The actor serves to draw the audience into empathetic involvement with the world of the play, and moves them emotionally into sympathy with the characters' fortune, good or bad. For a spectator judging by these standards, a "beautiful" performance by an actor is one in which the spectator strongly identifies with the actor's character and is genuinely affected by what he does or what happens to him -- in effect, responding to the "reality" of the play world much as if it were real in material fact. Although such a response is often sought by

Realistic play-producers, the philosophy of dramatic Realism does not emphasize the creation of beauty as such.

While not unique to Realism, this component of the interaction between the actor and his audience is fundamental to its esthetic philosophy. There have been a number of experiments over the past century in redefining how the audience and the actor relate to each other -- Berthold Brecht's "Epic" theatre and Antonin Artaud's "Theatre of Cruelty" are two notable examples -- but like Realism, these experiments usually had very different priorities than the creation of beauty.

Shortly after the earliest Realistic theatre productions began at the end of the nineteenth century, the first coherent anti-Realistic dramatic movement also appeared. Adherents of this movement, which was known as "Symbolism", proclaimed themselves opposed to the principles and practices of Realism. In their proposals for a new type of drama they placed particular emphasis upon their esthetic philosophy. The most critically- and popularly-successful producer of plays in the Symbolist vein was the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre of Paris. During the early eighteen-nineties its founder and director, Aurélien Lugné-Poe, was widely seen in France as the champion of dramatic Symbolism. If a Symbolist esthetic was ever taken beyond pure theory and deliberately applied to production, it was at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre under Lugné-Poe.

Career of Lugné-Poe

Born December 17, 1869, the son of a banker, Aurélien Lugné-Poe

attended several schools before being enrolled in the Lycée Condorcet in Paris in 1886. It was at the Lycée that he first displayed a serious interest in theatrical production: with his friend and classmate Georges Bourdon, he founded the "Cercle des Escholiers", an association of amateur players ostensibly dedicated to performing "des oeuvres inédite ou tout au moins peu connues".[1] In 1887 they mounted their first production, Charlotte Corday by Ponsard (written 1850). A few months later Lugné left the Escholiers, apparently because of personal conflicts.[2] Shortly afterward Lugné auditioned for the actor-training program at the renowned Conservatoire of the Comédie Française, although he was not accepted until a subsequent audition in the fall of 1888. That was also the year he joined the ground-breaking Théâtre Libre of André Antoine, who had already become a notable, not to mention controversial proponent of theatrical Realism, which was still experimental at this time.

Lugné worked with Antoine for nearly two years as an actor and stage manager. It was the young man's first exposure to a disciplined theatre company, and he often remarked afterward that he had learned the craft of play-production from Antoine, and especially how to simplify a play, eliminating unnecessary elements of setting and performance.[3] Some sources have asserted that Lugné broke with Antoine over artistic philosophy, although there is no firm evidence as to the former's close involvement with Symbolism this early in his career. (See Chapter I for further discussion of André Antoine and the Théâtre Libre.)

In 1890 Lugné was sharing quarters in Paris with three young painters who would become famous as the artistic circle called "Les Nabis" (from a Hebrew word for "inspired prophets"): Edouard Vuillard, Pierre Bonnard

and Maurice Denis, the last of whom Lugné had known at the Lycée Condorcet. These men were deeply involved in the philosophy of art, and wrote many articles on the nature and function of the visual, literary and performing arts, espousing concepts similar to those of the Symbolists. Unquestionably Lugné was involved in the lively discussions among the Nabis, and thus may have begun to develop his own theatrical philosophy.

After spending most of the fall and winter of 1890 at Reims in mandatory military service, Lugné-Poe became involved in Paul Fort's Théâtre d'Art, the first professional theatre to be dedicated to mounting Symbolist plays. In his time at the Théâtre d'Art Lugné-Poe appeared in major roles in several productions, including the Paris debut of L'Intruse by Maurice Maeterlinck, who would become the most famous Symbolist dramatist and Lugné's friend and frequent collaborator. Lugné-Poe was caught up in the excitement of this new theatrical venture; he remarked in later years that he had learned discipline from Antoine, but enthusiasm from Paul Fort.[4] The plays which Fort had done or planned to do mirror much that Lugné-Poe later produced at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre: the works of Maeterlinck and other Symbolist writers, works by Scandinavian playwrights such as Henrik Ibsen, and classical Oriental plays.[5] Paul Fort's theatre was short-lived, producing its last play in March of 1892, and effectively dissolving by the spring of 1893, but it began the experiment which was carried on more successfully by the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

By December of 1891 Lugné-Poe had apparently become reconciled with the Cercle des Escholiers, returning to work with them as actor and director even while studying at the Conservatoire and working at the

Théâtre d'Art. It was at his urging that the Escholiers performed Ibsen's Lady from the Sea ("Dame de la Mer") in December of 1892 under Lugné's direction, an event which marked the start of a fruitful collaboration between Lugné-Poe and Ibsen. However, the Escholiers's refusal to stage Maeterlinck's Pelléas y Mélisande resulted in Lugné's arranging his own production, at the Bouffes Parisiens in Paris in May 1893, which he directed and performed in. The critical success of this production at the very least encouraged Lugné-Poe to found his own theatre company, the "Théâtre de l'Oeuvre", which opened October 1893 with Ibsen's Rosmersholm.

The Théâtre de l'Oeuvre enjoyed mixed critical and popular success in Paris until its closure in 1899. Lugné-Poe continued to work occasionally in Paris in the early 1900's, and began organizing several foreign tours with his wife, actress Suzanne Deprès -- a continuation of a tradition of touring he began years before under the banner of "L'Oeuvre Internationale". Lugné also organized Paris showings by foreign performers in 1908, 1909 and 1911: not just plays, but dances and concerts as well.[6] In 1909 Lugné-Poe founded the Revue de l'Oeuvre, a critical periodical devoted to theatrical and literary concerns. After spending World War I in the military, Lugné decided that the time was right for the return of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to Paris. In November 1919 the Maison de l'Oeuvre opened in the Salle Berlioz, at the Cité-Monthiers, rue de Clichy. Lugné-Poe acted as artistic and stage director of the theatre until his retirement in 1929, although he continued to act and direct, at the Oeuvre and elsewhere, for several years afterward. Lugné-Poe died July 19, 1940.

Symbolism at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre

In the preceding biographical outline of Lugné-Poe's career, a close association between this man and the theatrical branch of the Symbolist movement is implied at several points. To predicate a deliberate, uniform orientation toward Symbolist principles by the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, one must be reasonably confident of such an orientation on the part of Lugné himself. Lugné-Poe founded and served as artistic director for the Oeuvre, choosing and researching all plays; as well he was its principal director for all productions, and often its designer. For various reasons most of the cast and crew were amateurs or young aspiring professionals; while their inexperience might have impeded Lugné's attempts to realize his artistic vision, they could also have been expected to submit themselves to their director's vision more readily than seasoned veterans -- a fact that had already been proven by such notable directors as the Duke of Saxë-Meiningen and André Antoine. (See p. 4).

Evidence of Lugné-Poe's Symbolist orientation must be derived from secondary sources and inferred from his statements and actions. Lugné seems to have been careful to avoid identifying himself (at least in print) with Symbolism or any other movement, preferring to portray himself as the champion of all plays of "value" from whatever source. After several seasons Lugné became frustrated by the Symbolists' inability, in his opinion, to produce a "chef d'oeuvre", or masterpiece of modern French theatre.[7] In a letter to the literary daily Le Figaro, published June 21, 1897, Lugné-Poe denied any past or future allegiance to Symbolism or adherence to its philosophy. Ironically, the fact that Lugné-Poe felt the

need to publicly disavow any identification with Symbolism indicates how strong that identification must have been in the public consciousness, as does the storm of protest which followed his letter; a response condemning and refuting Lugné's statements was published in several journals, and signed by several major Symbolist figures, including Henry Bataille, Paul Fort, Alfred Jarry, Pierre Quillard, and Henri de Régnier.[8] Other evidence of Lugné's orientation is also circumstantial, but overwhelming when taken as a whole. Firstly, there is the universal assurance by critics and scholars both contemporary to the Oeuvre and of later generations, that Lugné-Poe's productions embodied the principles of Symbolism in the theatre the most successfully of any attempt to that time. There were his associations with various figures influential to the Symbolist movement: Paul Fort, whose Théâtre d'Art was, at the time Lugné worked there, declared by Fort to be "absolument symboliste";[9] the "Nabis", who influenced the spread of ideas similar to those of Symbolism in art; Maurice Maeterlinck, the foremost playwright in the Symbolist mode; and Stéphane Mallarmé, the premier formulator of Symbolist dramatic theory, who was highly respected by Lugné-Poe during the early years of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.[10] Lastly, during a tour of the Scandinavian countries with his company in 1894, Lugné held several conferences in which he reportedly espoused the Symbolist approach to the theatre.[11]

It is true that Lugné-Poe produced plays from a variety of sources. In letters published in several literary journals during his theatre's first four seasons, Lugné-Poe repeatedly proclaimed his intention to produce original plays of merit by new French dramatists, and to present to French audiences superior works of foreign drama, both contemporary and

historical. An overview of Oeuvre programs (found in Appendix A) reveals most of its original productions to be of plays by avowed Symbolists or writers influenced by Symbolism. The majority of foreign plays at the Oeuvre were by contemporary Scandinavian dramatists, whose works Lugné-Poe particularly championed, while "historical" dramas were mostly represented by classical Oriental plays, which were just beginning to influence the European theatre. There is plainly considerable diversity among just these three categories of plays. While most of these plays contain elements which can be readily shown to be compatible with Symbolist ideals, many of them had little in common structurally or even thematically with Symbolism. If the Oeuvre was indeed Symbolist in its approach to drama (as so many sources affirm), then that approach was more likely manifested in its style of presentation than its play selection. Since "style of presentation" implies some emphasis on esthetics, that which identified the Oeuvre as "Symbolist" most likely included a characteristic esthetic. In fact Camille Mauclair, one of the co-founders of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, asserted that their criterion for choosing a play would be "tout uniment ce qui est beau".[12] If the theatre's artistic philosophy was applied to production consistently, then its esthetic elements should also have been consistent, including the esthetic of the actor/ audience relationship.

Thesis Statement and Methodology

It is the assertion of this thesis that there exists a common,

underlying esthetic conception of the relationship of actor to audience in productions at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, in Paris, France, under the directorship of Aurélien Lugné-Poe, between the years 1893 and 1897.

We have already established the validity of examining the work of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre from this perspective. The time-frame for study falls between the founding of the Oeuvre and the publication in Le Figaro of Lugné's repudiation of Symbolist influence on his theatre -- plainly the most promising period in which to find Symbolism manifested at the Oeuvre. While Lugné's company toured other countries extensively during the summer months over these years, this thesis will confine its study to productions mounted in Paris, to render more uniform such factors as audience composition, theatre design and secondary research-sources. While productions outside of Paris will be referred to in the course of this thesis, they will be used only to illustrate or clarify minor or general points.

Each section of the thesis will refer to and further clarify the esthetics of Symbolism in general and the actor/audience relationship in particular, culminating in a statement of that esthetic as applied at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. The thesis will first define the characteristics of Realistic theatrical productions, and of the school of theatrical Realism and of its sub-movement, Naturalism, as they existed at the end of the nineteenth century. This will help clarify the philosophical differences between Realism and Symbolism; moreover, it will specify the concepts most vigorously opposed to Realism, since it was partly in reaction to that movement that theatrical Symbolism evolved. Next, the discussion will elucidate the precepts of the Symbolist theorists, particularly those

theorists who demonstrably influenced Lugné-Poe, such as Mallarmé, Mauclair, Maeterlinck and Denis. It will focus on how those precepts affected play production and on the ideal audience response to that production. Then the performance environment will be examined: the size and shape of the audience space, and set elements and technical effects as they affected the actors and audience. Finally, the specific approach taken by the actor will be considered, as an ideal conception of the actor's relationship to the audience and as embodied in fact at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

As a consistent illustration of the arguments of the thesis, four exemplary plays will be referred to throughout this discussion. They will provide a convenient "cross-section" of the programs of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, with at least one play from each of the categories of Oeuvre plays mentioned in the previous section of the Introduction: original French (Symbolist), contemporary foreign (Scandinavian), and historical foreign (classical Oriental). Each play also possesses qualities illustrative of the Symbolist conception of drama, or pertinent to the argument of this thesis:

Maurice Maeterlinck was the most successful French-language dramatist to write in the Symbolist vein. His one act play Intérieur, performed by Lugné's company March 1895 at the Nouveau Théâtre, is typical of Maeterlinck's language, themes, characters and structure. It also features a stage set which is itself a powerful metaphor for the play, and which illustrates the effect and use of sets in Symbolism and at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

Europeans of the late nineteenth century were just becoming aware

of Oriental art, and the drama of the Far East had a considerable impact on the developing Symbolist ideas. The conventions of the classical Sanskrit drama of India bore some resemblance to those evolving in Symbolism. Lugné-Poe's company performed The Clay Cart ("Le Chariot de terre cuite") in January 1895 at the Nouveau-Théâtre. Although this play is universally considered one of the great Sanskrit dramas, it is in some ways atypical of the genre: characters and situations are less elevated, dialogue more colloquial, plot and themes more secular. Since it does not conform to Symbolist ideals as closely as other Sanskrit plays, one would have expected a Symbolist interpretation of The Clay Cart to emphasize or eliminate certain elements in a recognizable pattern.

The Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was the premier proponent (and eventually, sole authorized professional producer) of the plays of Henrik Ibsen in France. Ibsen's Rosmersholm was the Oeuvre's debut production, October 1893 at the Bouffes du Nord. It appears at least superficially to be a strongly Realistic play, with individualized characters, contemporary references and situations, and characteristic plot structure. In November 1896 the Oeuvre presented a stage version of Ibsen's dramatic poem Peer Gynt at the Nouveau-Théâtre; it is a work very different from the rest of Ibsen's plays, being rather "freeform" in structure and containing many elements of fantasy. (Lugné-Poe's production also made extensive use of music and dance elements; the integration of these elements into a unified stage performance was one of the conceptual ideals of Symbolist theatre.) Comparison of these two very different plays will help illustrate the common qualities of Ibsen's drama which appealed to both the Symbolists and Lugné-Poe.

End Notes

[1]Livre d'Or, p. 26, quoted in Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), p. 55 (hereafter cited as Robichez, Le Symbolisme).

[2]Aurélien Lugné-Poe, La Parade: Souvenirs et impressions de théâtre, 4th ed., 4 vols., vol. 1: Le Sot de tremplin (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1930), p. 67.

[3]Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe (Paris: L'Arche, 1955), p. 37.

[4]Lugné-Poe, p. 202.

[5]Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris: E. Droz, 1934), p. 142.

[6]Robichez, Lugné-Poe, p. 139.

[7]Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 339.

[8]Ibid., pp. 394-95.

[9]Paul Fort, L'Echo de Paris, 24 February 1891, quoted in Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 113.

[10]Robichez, Le Symbolisme, p. 299.

[11]Knowles, p. 276.

[12]Camille Mauclair, Le Mercure de France 9 (October 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 191-92.

Chapter I: Theatrical Realism as Opposed by Symbolism

Symbolist Reaction Against Realism

To judge from articles and reviews in critical journals of the era, the artistic field in France of the late nineteenth century was a battleground for contending philosophies, each of which sought recognition of its preeminence. The relative merits of each approach were hotly debated within a host of periodicals which sprang up in Paris and other centers in the last quarter of the century.[1] In the conflict between philosophies of art the theatre appears to have held an important strategic position, probably because of the power of live theatre to present one's views graphically and with immediacy. As Émile Zola, nineteenth-century French novelist and essayist, reminded his readers: "Il ne faut point oublier la merveilleuse puissance du théâtre, son effet immédiat sur les spectateurs. Il n'existe pas de meilleur instrument de propagande."[2]

Zola's career is an illustration of the efforts by artistic philosophies to "occupy" the theatre: although he achieved his initial and greatest success as a novelist, he devoted much of his creative effort to defining and promoting theatrical Realism through his essays and plays. Symbolism, originally a philosophy of poetry, began to move into the realm of the drama partly in reaction to the Realistic trend in the theatre, and

especially to some of Realism's early, extreme experiments. This artistic conflict reached its greatest intensity in Paris in the eighteen-nineties due to the presence of prominent theatrical exponents of both philosophies: for the Realists, the Théâtre Libre under its founder and artistic director, André Antoine; for the Symbolists, first the Théâtre d'Art of Paul Fort, and then Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

While the practices of these theatres may have modified theory to some extent, the basic precepts of dramatic Symbolism had their origins in a reaction to the theory and principles of Realism, especially as propounded by Zola and practised by Antoine. Any examination of Symbolist theatre must also consider the development and character of theatrical Realism in the nineteenth century.

Origins of Realism

The nineteenth century was a time of great upheaval throughout Western Europe. The Industrial Revolution continued to advance as more and more people flocked to the growing cities in search of work. While the middle-classes became increasingly prosperous, many people grew concerned over the oppressive conditions under which the workers laboured. At the same time, advances in science were shaping an increasingly rationalistic and empirical view of the world which challenged traditional Christian theology and Church-backed natural philosophy. France in particular had been at the centre of the political disruptions and restructuring caused by the Napoleonic Wars, and had suffered further political weakening after the collapse of the Second Empire in 1870; the

following decade helped shape the young writers, artists and directors who would search for new philosophies and ideals.[3]

The ultimate triumph of theatrical Realism grew out of its organic association with the major social and intellectual trends of the nineteenth century. Realism's subject's were largely drawn from the rapidly-changing economic and social conditions that were of great concern to Europeans. These subjects were presented in a sociological context befitting the growing preoccupation with empirical science as a rationalization for human behaviour. Despite the topicality of its subjects, Realism's techniques of playwriting and stage production adapted methods already well established by its theatrical precursors.

Precursors to Realism

While the lines of battle between Realists and Idealists in the theatre appeared clearly drawn to most of their respective proponents, many drama critics of the period did not make such sharp distinctions among the various experiments in theatre. To these men the work of Antoine, the productions of Paul Fort and Lugné-Poe, even the plays mounted by the Cercle des Escholiers, were part of the "new theatre", the input of fresh young minds onto the artistic scene -- whether that input was met with applause or derision. In one way or another these would-be pioneers attempted to break away from the conventions of the "old theatre"; yet those conventions were in no small way responsible for the dramatic evolution of the final decades of the century.

The French neoclassical drama, epitomized by the tragedies of

Corneille and Racine and the comedies of Molière, was still the mainstay of the state supported Comédie Française in Paris, but had ceased to be a dynamic influence on theatre by the end of the eighteenth century. The "Romantic" movement had been one of the dominant forces in the theatre of the West during the early nineteenth century, but by the eighteen-fifties the genre had lost much of its popular support. On the other hand, "melodrama", which had developed over the same period as Romantic drama, remained one of the most popular entertainments and an active influence on the theatre. In spite of their differences in themes and subjects (of which Realism had almost nothing in common with its predecessors), Realism owed a debt to both Romanticism and melodrama for pioneering the staging conventions and techniques of presentation which Realism adopted to articulate its own philosophy.

Romanticism emphasized supernatural forces at work in the world, drawing subjects from mythology and folklore. It idealized the inherent goodness of the human spirit, especially in its "primitive" state, unencumbered by the accumulated history of "civilized" society.[4] An era rife with political and social turbulence and growing materialism was unlikely to nourish such idealism. Nevertheless, Romanticism paved the way for Realism's use of stage settings representative of a particular individualized time, place and environment (i.e. contemporary Western Europe) by making historical and cultural accuracy a prime concern in staging. In the eighteenth century, especially in French neoclassical drama, stage settings were little more than generalized back-drops before which the actors played without really interacting with the set; a given theatre might "dress" any and all shows from one city exterior set, one

country exterior, one palace interior, and so on. Regional or historical details were considered unimportant since the plays purported to present "universal" character-types and precepts independent of time or place. The Romantic drama changed that attitude by idealizing more primitive cultures as being closer to nature, and hence to truth, than modern civilized man. The result of this shift in viewpoint for the theatre was the emphasis on details of a culture's environment that made it different from Europe's;[5] sets were designed to more accurately reflect a particular environment, including three-dimensional set pieces which the characters could touch and use.

Melodrama interspersed elements of music, song and dance within the play itself. It placed great reliance on spectacle and suspense to excite the audience, and included humorous characters for "comic relief". The conflicts between characters were broadly but clearly defined as good versus evil, with good ultimately rewarded and evil punished. Although the plays of the genre have not retained their popularity into the twentieth century, in its day melodrama had broad audience appeal due to its accessible and morally reassuring message, and its inclusion of diverse elements of performance which gave it "something for everyone". As Romanticism was laying the groundwork for environmental fidelity, melodrama, with its emphasis on spectacle, was developing stage machinery for rapid and elaborate set changes, on-stage lights, fire, and running water, and a host of other effects. With the increasing technical sophistication of the eighteen-hundreds, by the end of the century the resources existed to simulate most environments theatrically with a fairly high degree of accuracy.[6]

There is little evidence that proponents of the new drama acknowledged any debt to melodrama. Critics of the Realist school (and the Symbolist, for that matter) levelled particular censure against melodrama,[7] probably as much because of its dominance of the popular theatre as its perceived dramatic failings. The most frequent recipient of critical invective was the highly successful playwright Eugène Scribe (1791-1861) and the many who imitated his style.[8] Ironically, it was Scribe who perfected the formula of dramatic plot that the Realists would adopt for their own plays: the "well-made play". The well-made-play was characterized by careful exposition and clear cause-to-effect arrangement of events. While Scribe emphasized the mechanics of the plot, using unexpected but logical reversals of the characters' fortune to build suspense at the expense of characterization, the Realists found the linear logic of the well-made play highly suitable to their rational approach to drama, and it remains the basic pattern for much Realistic drama today.

Realism and Naturalism: Theory

The parameters of Realistic drama as we would define them today have greatly broadened over the years. In its beginnings the genre was more firmly grounded in the philosophy and scientific discoveries that had effected a fundamental change in Western man's perception of the world. Among the most significant influences was the philosophy of August Comte (1798-1857), which came to be labelled Positivism, and the publication of Charles Darwin's book The Origin of Species in 1859. However, it was in the essays of Émile Zola (1840-1902) that the scientific approach to the

literary arts was most rigorously applied. Although not particularly successful as a dramatist, Zola's theories on the theatre were well-known in intellectual and artistic circles, especially in his native France. The term "naturalism", which Zola applied generally to his literary/artistic philosophy, came to signify a particular approach to the theatre. Realism and Naturalism as conscious movements were closely related, but it was the more extreme manifestations of Naturalism that seemed to provoke the fiercest opposition by Symbolists; the Naturalists carried the philosophical principles they shared with theatrical Realism to their logical limits, whether or not the result was ideally suited to presentation on a stage.

Both Realism and Naturalism embodied the Positivist admonition to confine one's observations to the materially perceivable world, that which could be detected through the five senses. This philosophy led its adherents to declare the "realms" beyond what the senses could perceive as unknowable by man; hence life-after-death, fate, and destiny were all impenetrable, a distinction which completely excluded religion, philosophical reasoning, and metaphysics from the realm of drama.[9] Logically, then, the playwright was expected to write about what he could most readily observe, the society around him. The details of daily life became worthy of inclusion in drama, as they enhanced understanding of the characters and the environment in which they functioned. Social problems were common topics for Realist and Naturalist plays, but personal and political conflicts were just as common provided they were seen as part of the "real" world, true to the way the playwrights' contemporaries actually behaved.

The scientific discoveries of the century, particularly those of Darwin, had caused human behaviour to be seen as the product of two principal forces: heredity, the genetic characteristics passed from generation to generation; and environment, those surroundings and events which influence a person's development. These forces, and the actions that they impelled the characters toward, were usually portrayed as inevitable[10] -- a kind of determinism as irresistible as Fate or God had been in earlier drama. Characters in Realistic and Naturalistic plays became more individualized than previously as each character was the unique sum of many elements (although parallels and connections with broader categories of humanity were still made).

The early Realists, while generally conforming to these principles, did not let them interfere with the practical necessities of playwriting. While their themes, subjects and characters might be drawn from or inspired by their contemporary world, they still selected and organized incidents and stressed certain elements of plot and character, in order to maintain the audience's interest and involvement in their play. The Naturalists, at least in theory, allowed themselves far less "dramatic license". Naturalism sought to apply the scientific approach of objective observation and experimentation upon human society to works of literature.[11] Rather than tailoring a recognizably "real-world" situation or personality to illustrate a point or persuade an audience toward the playwright's views, the Naturalistic writer was expected to objectively record "the facts" without allowing his own prejudices to intrude. Even the deliberate organization of a plot was viewed as an imposition on reality, the faithful recording of which was the dramatist's prime

responsibility according to Zola:

> Au lieu d'imaginer une aventure, de la compliquer, de ménager des coups de théâtre qui, de scène en scène, la conduisent à une conclusion finale, on prend simplement dans la vie l'histoire d'un être ou d'un groupe d'êtres dont on enregistre les actes fidèlement.[12]

Zola himself was less stringent as a practising dramatist than as a theorist, but Naturalists in general made sincere efforts to transfer the actuality of life to the stage, at the expense of theatrical playability and audience appeal.

On the other hand, Naturalism seemed to be in accord with Realism in insisting that actors appear completely "natural" and "true-to-life" in their diction and stage movement.[13] In earlier centuries certain actors were lauded for the "realism" of their performances, but the term is relative; before the Realistic movement acting was essentially declamatory, directed outward toward the audience, and couched in elevated diction. Realism and Naturalism demanded that the actor ignore the audience (insofar as the realities of live theatre allowed) and that he confine his attention only to the characters and objects within the set, treating the world of the play as a reality apart from that of the audience. Both movements further insisted that the actor's voice, movement and diction follow commonly accepted patterns of normal human behaviour, although it is difficult to determine whether Naturalism, so exacting in other areas, conceded anything in the mechanics of acting to the demands of "theatricality".

Realism and Naturalism: Practice

Many of the early works of Realistic and Naturalistic drama, whether the French plays of Zola and Henri Becque, or translations of plays by foreign dramatists such as Henrik Ibsen or August Strindberg, received their first French production at André Antoine's Théâtre Libre. The Libre was the first professional attempt at Realistic theatre in Paris, and its reputation did much to popularize and legitimize that form of drama in France and the rest of Western Europe.

The Théâtre Libre is a useful referent for discussion of Realistic/Naturalistic theatre practices, not only for its deliberate espousal of that approach, but also for its impact on the development of Symbolism, as Dorothy Knowles points out: "ces [Antoine] excès auxquels le Théâtre Libre s'est laissé entrainer, ont, sans doute, précipité au théâtre le mouvement de 'reaction'".[14] The most frequent protest (by critics and the public) against Antoine's theatre were reserved for his choice of dramatic subjects. In his attempts to depict "real life" on his stage, Antoine was often accused of presenting "comédie rosse" -- of concentrating upon and exaggerating the wretchedness of life, especially among the poor and the working classes, to the point of vulgarity.[15] Part of that negative perception was doubtless due to the almost total absence of such subjects in the theatre in the past. While melodrama often depicted characters in despair, to show physical and moral squalor on stage was considered esthetically unpleasant. Nevertheless, it was true that social conflicts and misfortunes were common subjects for early Realistic writers. The proponents of Realism seem to have been in general

agreement with Zola that truth was their moral ideal, no matter how ugly that truth appeared: "les idéalistes prétendent qu'il est nécessaire de mentir pour être moral, les naturalistes affirment qu'on ne saurait être moral en dehors du vrai."[16]

Realism's preoccupation with a person's environment had a direct and profound effect on Antoine's staging practices. In creating an individualized character for a fictional story, the details of the character's environment became vital indicators, for the director, actors, and audience, as to why that character thinks and acts as he does. Antoine preferred to create what he considered an appropriate environment on stage before deciding how the actors were to use it in performance: "C'est le milieu qui détermine les mouvements des personnages et non les mouvements des personnages qui détermine le milieu."[17] Antoine strove to recreate a "real-life" environment in as much detail as possible: actors ran water on the set, lit fires, cooked and ate real meals; real properties were used whenever possible; sometimes live animals were introduced on stage when applicable. The degree of detail required at the Théâtre Libre was actually more in keeping with Naturalist rather than Realist staging. One must keep in mind that the psychological studies of Sigmund Freud, which gave a scientific explanation to the subjectivity of human perception, were as yet largely unknown. Scientifically explicable reality could only be presented through objective, universally recognizable images and patterns: a room in a house must always look like a normal room in a normal house; time in the play must advance linearly.

When combined with Realistic acting technique (as described in the preceding section), the result of the Théâtre Libre's production style was

a high degree of stage illusionism, further enhanced by André Antoine's utilization of improvements in artificial, directional lighting. By darkening the audience space while illuminating the stage (a technique almost unheard-of before this), Antoine reduced audience consciousness of being in the artificial environment of a theatre while reenforcing their impression of observing a real stage "world" separate from their own. In this way the audience could be more easily drawn into empathetic involvement with the play.

Summary

In hindsight, one can see that Realism was a natural, perhaps inevitable expression on the stage of the political, social and intellectual changes in nineteenth-century Western Europe. Its subjects reflected the increased concern over and study of human behaviour, both by individuals and within social groups. Its structure borrowed freely from the dramatic techniques and precedents established by Romantic drama and melodrama, while its overall approach was influenced by growing scientific empiricism. Naturalism also embodied many of the same principles, but was less willing to modify them to suit the limitations of live theatre; that inflexibility contributed to the movement's rapid decline.

The early anti-Realistic theatre was to a large extent a response and a challenge to Naturalistic excesses, particularly by the Théâtre Libre, but was ideologically opposed to all essentially Realistic drama. It was the first "anti-Realists", the Symbolists, who would attempt to

"save" the theatre by restoring the sense of higher reality lost to the contemporary popular drama as well as to Realism and Naturalism. Ironically, Realism proved flexible enough to absorb many of the staging innovations pioneered by Symbolism and subsequent anti-Realistic movements, contributing to Realism's dynamic longevity.

End Notes

[1]The most successful and influential periodicals included L'Art Moderne, L'Ermitage, Le Mercure de France, La Plume, La Revue bleue, La Revue blanche (published in French in Brussels), La Revue hebdomadaire, La Revue d'art dramatique, and La Revue indépendante.

[2]Émile Zola, "Naturalisme au théâtre," Oeuvres complètes illustrées d'Émile Zola. 19 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1906), 19: 154.

[3]Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris: E. Droz, 1934), p. 24.

[4]Oscar G. Brockett, Historical Edition. The Theatre: An Introduction (New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1979), pp. 186-87.

[5]Victor Hugo, Preface to Cromwell (Paris: Librairie Alphonse Lemerre, 1951), pp. 32-33, 44.

[6]Brockett, p. 257.

[7]See Zola, Preface to Thérèse Raquin, in Oeuvres complètes illustrées d'Émile Zola. 19 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1906), 17: 6.

[8]Knowles, p. 17.

[9]Ibid., p. 8.

[10]Ibid., p. 15.

[11]Ibid., p. 11.

[12]Zola, "Naturalisme au théâtre," 19: 148.

[13]Knowles, p. 19.

[15]Ibid., pp. 16-17.

[16]Zola, "Naturalisme au théâtre," 19: 149.

[17]André Antoine, "Causerie sur la mise en scène," La Revue de Paris 11 (April 1903): 603.

Chapter II: Symbolist Precepts Influencing Play Production

The Idealist Movement

In the preceding chapter we saw how the Realistic movement in the theatre was inspired and sustained by the dominant intellectual and social trends of nineteenth-century Europe. Dominance, however, does not equate with exclusivity. The last quarter of the century saw many departures from empiricism and "social relevance" in drama, literature, plastic art and music. Some of these, including the Symbolist theatre, developed in part as a reaction to Realism; others, such as the opera of Richard Wagner or the painting of Paul Gauguin, had a different motivation, but influenced successive generations of experimenters in all the arts. By the last decade of the century this collective body of thought had developed a measure of coherence (in intent if not in technique), and was known by the umbrella label, "Idealism". While Idealism did not survive the nineteenth century intact, the perspectives and techniques which its adherents pioneered enriched the arts as a whole, and continue to influence them today.

The aspirations of Idealism were vague and generalized, and its principles difficult to define precisely, both because it favoured individual vision over universal rules, and because it rejected the kind of logical patterning that gives such clear form and structure to Realism.

Idealism sought to embody the mystery of the universe, which science was so resolutely trying to take apart. It emphasized the irrational, inexplicable elements and forces within Man and throughout nature. It aspired to universal themes and motifs not tied to time or place, as was Realistic art. Underlying Idealist philosophy was the almost Platonic concept of objects, creatures, even states of mind existing in an ideal state, of an "idea" beyond the surface appearance of things which writers, painters and the like tried to depict. This seems to be the meaning behind the oft-repeated assertion by Idealists (and by Lugné-Poe) that they were trying to return the "idea" of things to art.[1]

Idealism's sources of inspiration were as varied as the different arts it embraced, but certain universal influences can be readily identified. When one narrows the field of focus to literary and dramatic Symbolism, the influences become clearer and more specific.

In some ways Idealism perpetuated the heritage of Romanticism, although largely unintentionally. The Idealists resembled the Romantics in their perception of the universe as essentially mysterious and inexplicable. Like the Romantics, Idealists placed great importance on individual, subjective vision; as a result their work lacked a common, unifying structure, contributing to their movement's fragmentation and decline as it had to that of their Romantic predecessors. The subjects and settings for Idealist art were often foreign or historical, thus distancing it from contemporary Europe and providing a more "believable" forum for the revelation of mystery (although mythology, folklore or pure fiction served that purpose as well and were as often employed). Certain themes from Romantic drama remained popular with playwrights of Symbolist

persuasion, notably the purifying effect of "true love" on a character.[2]

A more directly-acknowledged influence, especially upon the Symbolist theorists, were the ideas of composer Richard Wagner. Wagner had proposed a form of "music drama" which would unite all the arts (music, song and dance, acting, painting and sculpture) into a single "synthetized" production, with all components contributing to the overall effect of "uplifting" the audience. Wagner's granting of prime importance in this synthesis to music was disputed by many Symbolists, but most of them, notably poet Stéphane Mallarmé and Camille Mauclair were enamoured of the basic concept. The prestige of "artistic synthesis" in that circle was enhanced by its similarity to the "théorie des correspondances" of the poet Charles Baudelaire, who proposed "mingling the senses" through which the audience experienced an entertainment.[3] Mallarmé in particular saw this synthesis mirrored theatrically in the classical Greek drama, with its integration in performance of elements of poetry, song, mime and spectacle. Synthesis was a concept which profoundly affected Symbolism's approach to performance, setting and technical effects.

Paul Gauguin and the young painters inspired by him, who attempted to render their subjective impressions on canvas, elicited considerable critical discussion among Idealists. Notable among these painters were Lugné's friends of "les Nabis"; one of them in particular, Maurice Denis, was a prolific artistic theorist as well as an artist. Denis articulated the theory of "the symbol"; although this concept was originally applied to painting it describes very well the kind of "spectacle" which the Symbolist dramatists tried to create in the theatre:

> les émotions ou les états d'âme provoqués par un spectacle quelconque comportaient dans l'imagination de l'artiste des signes ou équivalents plastiques capables de reproduire ces émotions ou états d'âme[4]

The commonly-held tenets of Idealism, and the Idealists' "common front" against the Realistic trend in art, are only part of the philosophy of Symbolist theatre. Some crucial elements of their esthetic grew organically from the movement's roots as a poetic rather than theatrical movement, while other elements were adapted from sources and models which they consciously chose.

Symbolism as Poetry

The Symbolists differed somewhat among themselves in details of their philosophy, but were firmly and vocally united behind several general principles: the "salvation" of literature from both outdated older forms and the new Realistic approach; the effects that they hoped to induce in their audience; and the primacy of the writer's personal vision. In practice, however, the style and method of individual writers varied considerably. Part of the problem lay in the intense individuality of the Symbolist writers; each one attempted to materialize his personal feelings, fears or dreams. These were never spelled out as explicitly as in Realism or Naturalism, but rather suggested in symbols and motifs so as to touch the emotions and "soul" of the audience, instead of the intellect. However, since the symbols and motifs were highly personal, they often differed greatly from one writer to another. Such variations make it impossible to define a Symbolist structure, in the way one can

identify the well-made play with Realism; nevertheless, several elements in the approach to theatre production are common to most Symbolists, being derived either from their shared ideas or their common literary heritage.

As a term defining a particular philosophy of art, "symbolism" was coined by the poet, Moréas.[5] Symbolism made its initial impact on the artistic scene as poetry, and the poetic connection remained crucial to the movement's theatrical approach. The most prominent theatre practitioners of Idealist persuasion, Paul Fort and Lugné-Poe, drew most of the new plays which they produced from poets who were influenced by or claimed allegiance to Symbolism.[6]

The poetic heritage of Symbolist drama shows most strongly in its use of language. The "poetry" of Symbolism is not necessarily verse, rather it is identified by the effect it produces, an emotional or spiritual "evocation".[7] The evocation which the Symbolist writers sought was of another world, another reality coexistent with this one[8] -- more "true", more mysterious, the home or source of unseen forces acting on human destiny. To achieve that evocation some Symbolist writers (notably Maeterlinck and those who copied his style) tailored the sounds and rhythms of their language in a decidedly non-realistic fashion, for which no better description exists than "poetic". The Symbolists saw a close kinship between poetry and music (a view doubtless prompted by the "Wagnerian" and Greek models) and felt that poetry could be used as a language of drama to create a response in the audience in the same way as music. These writers' words and syntax suggested meaning or "resonances" underlying what was actually said, as in the dialogue from Maeterlinck's Intérieur: "Elle ne peut pas nous voir; nous sommes dans l'ombre des

grands arbres."[9] The implicit underlying symbolism of the speaker, the "Old Man", being in "l'ombre des grands arbres" is intensified within the visual context of the play, which contrasts the peace of the warmly-lit interior of the house with the gloom and threat of the shadowy garden. (See Appendix B, Figure 1, and Chapter III, p. 49, for more on the visual symbolism of this play.) This use of language was to prove significant to the actors' interpretation of their roles, as we shall see when we examine acting in detail.

Symbolism as Drama

The transition from the philosophy of poetry as writing to poetry as theatre is not a simple or natural one. Several theorists contributed to enlarging the Symbolist esthetic to embrace the theatre: Charles Baudelaire, Henri de Régnier, Charles Morice, to name a few of the most influential. However, the poet and critic Stéphane Mallarmé proved to be the catalyst of a deliberate restructuring of the theatre according to this new esthetic. Mallarmé influenced young artists through his personal relationships with many of them, and through his critical writings for journals such as La Revue Indépendante.[10]

While Mallarmé's writings tended toward the vague and grandiloquent, his theories were taken up and further crystallized by other influential critics of like mind. Taken as a whole, they represent a fairly consistent conceptualization of theatrical Symbolism.

One major concern underlies all Symbolist dramatic theory, and shapes its approach to all areas of production: that the emotional and spiritual

insights of the playwright be conveyed to the audience evocatively rather than descriptively. Like Maurice Denis in his use of the "symbol", literary Symbolists searched for a means of expressing their own experiences in such a way as to recreate those experiences in the viewing audience. In Realistic and Naturalistic theatre all the information necessary for the audience to understand the characters' backgrounds and motivations is spelled out either through dialogue or the details of the stage environment. This is an essentially intellectual technique, however much "empathy" may ultimately be involved.

Thematically, Symbolism deals most often with the inevitability of human destiny. Characters in these plays appear to be moved by forces beyond their control or understanding toward a predetermined end, often, although not always, tragic. The forces in question may be strongly indicated to be divine in origin, as in the plays of Paul Claudel; more often they remain unexplained and inexplicable. The action of fate upon the characters is usually implied by recurring imagery or references by the characters, or lines with hidden meanings (techniques which shall be examined in detail in Chapters III and IV). Because the playwrights were trying to incarnate "destiny" as an emotional presence rather than an intellectual concept, characters in these plays were presented as unable to change their fates; consequently they tended to be passive, moved by circumstances rather than taking independent action. For this reason Symbolist plays were often accused of lacking dramatic tension. Yet inflexible determinism pervaded early Realism and Naturalism as well -- determinism rationalized as heredity and environment.[11] The characters strove against the forces that shaped and motivated them, but they

ultimately succumbed to those forces. If inevitable destiny was so much a part of both Realism and Symbolism, then they may not be intrinsically incompatible in other areas, such as performance esthetics (a possibility which will be tested against specific productions at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre).

The subjects of Symbolist plays were usually drawn from history, myth and folklore, or the individual's pure fantasy. In these environments the audience's belief in a rational world was more easily suspended, and the presentation of Fate and the supernatural more readily accepted. They were more fertile ground than the Industrial Revolution for the evocation of the mysterious. The revelation of the mystery of the universe was seen by Stéphane Mallarmé as one of the most important functions of his proposed form of drama, and several succeeding critics spoke of the need to return "le Mystère" to the theatre.[12] Although this "sense of mystery" had its source in the individual, personal insight of the playwright, the sharing of it was an important and valuable communal experience in Mallarmé's theory:

> La scène est le foyer évident des plaisirs en commun, aussi et tout bien réfléchi, la majestueuse ouverture sur le mystère dont on est au monde pour envisager la grandeur, cela même que le citoyen, qui en aura idée, fonde le droit de réclamer à un État, comme compensation de l'amoindrissement social.[13]

In light of the above explanation, it is easy to understand why Mallarmé was drawn to the ancient Greek theatre as a model for his own theory; its function as a religious celebration, drawing an entire community together in a common spiritual experience, was in accord with his own ideal. Henri de Régnier described Mallarmé's proposed theatre as

> quelque chose d'analogue peut-être aux nobles fêtes théâtrales de la Grèce, une sorte de spectacle à la fois national, religieux et humain, auditif et visuel, en même temps que métaphysique, et ou l'homme eût assisté à une célébration, non point réaliste mais fictive et emblématique de la vie et de lui-même.[14]

The liturgical implications of this statement are obvious and intentional. Most proponents of a "new drama", including Charles Morice, saw the theatre, in an increasingly secular world, as being the spiritual successor to religion in the modern age: "Le théâtre est l'église de la religion future... la célébration, consacré par l'art, des mystères naturels, et le rite suprême de la civilization consciente."[15] The spiritual, ceremonial elements of Symbolism were probably the most appealing to Lugné-Poe, since he was deeply affected by the religious services he performed in as a boy; Lugné remarked in later years that in those services he had been touched "de bonne heure d'une grâce théâtrale qui illumina [son] esprit et longtemps, presque, le subjugua."[16]

Traditional Christian church services and classical Greek theatre were both functions which reaffirmed and strengthened the bonds of a group of people sharing common beliefs and/or background. To understand the Symbolist esthetic, we must grasp what they saw to be the essential communality of the theatrical experience. The individual, personal empathy inspired by Realism was not their goal; the theatre was to be a place where everyone shared in unifying ritual and celebration of the wonder and mystery of the universe. The audience was not to be composed of isolated observers, but of active participants in a spiritual renewal.

However communal the ultimate experience might be, the playwright was considered the source of it. Symbolist drama tended to be language-oriented, as is not surprising for a movement that began as poetry.

Mallarmé advocated minimizing details of decor and spectacle that might "distract" from the poet's language, in effect "detheatricalizing" the theatre.[17] The Symbolists were especially opposed to their era's growing preoccupation with accurate and detailed reproduction of time and place in stage settings. Their attitude is admirably summarized by Camille Mauclair: "Le temps et le lieu étant nuisibles, puisqu'ils tendent à restreindre l'universel, le décor sera inutile."[18] The Symbolists equated universality with generalization; specific detail was seen as limiting a play to whatever era and region that detail was taken from.

The Symbolist theorists did concede a role in their theatre to scenic design, the same role as all the other non-verbal theatre arts -- that of supporting but being subservient to the ideas and language of the playwright. The Symbolist conception of the role of stage setting is almost opposite to that of the Realists and Naturalists, especially as embodied by André Antoine. Antoine saw the physical environment in which a play takes place as the graphic representation of its social milieu. Symbolists like Mauclair maintained that the goal of representation could be better served by elements that suggest a particular milieu rather than by a futile attempt to simulate an environment on a stage: "Peut-être une simple nuance de vert dégradé donnera-t-elle mieux l'impression d'une forêt qu'un découpage de carton imitant, et feuille à feuille, la nature."[19]

Although the Symbolist movement was inclined to denigrate the various elements that set live theatre apart from mere verbal recitation, it supported the Wagner-inspired precept that all such elements be integrated into the overall artistic concept of a play. This precept contributed to

an eventual shift in the popular perception of what constitutes stage setting. Symbolists were convinced that the value of scenery lay not in the realism and accuracy of the details themselves, but in the impression produced by those details taken as a whole.[20] They advocated modifying this impression (and hence the decor itself) according to the dominant mood of a play[21] -- a departure from both the environmental fidelity of Realism and the standardized backdrops of classical drama. By extension this approach would include music and sound, dance and other performance disciplines, and the growing sophistication of lighting technology. (Symbolist theory of setting, and how it corresponds to practices at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, will be examined in detail in Chapter III.)

Since Symbolism was essentially a verbal drama, conveying the playwright's message to the audience was mainly the function of the actor. However, the Symbolists, always jealous of the primacy of their personal vision, wished to minimize the tendency of actors to interpret a play according to their own beliefs and emotions. Charles Morice typified this attitude when he praised Paul Fort, whose Théâtre d'Art was expressly dedicated to Symbolism, for keeping his actors suitably "restrained": "Un des principes du Théâtre d'Art est de ne point laisser prendre à l'artiste interprète une importance exagérée, personnelle. Tout émane du poète et l'acteur lui doit l'obéissance passive."[22] Maurice Maeterlinck reportedly went so far as to propose replacing live actors with lifesize puppets so as to completely eliminate the "filtering" of the drama through human minds.[23]

The Symbolist theorists may have been drawn to the music-drama of Wagner partly because of his use of music to control his actors. The

precise orchestration of tempo, stress and volume, which the singer/actors had no choice but to follow, let Wagner govern the precise details of their performance.[24] Symbolism's version of this technique, pioneered by Maurice Maeterlinck, was built-in rhythms and stresses in dialogue, often including interruptive pauses as in this passage from Intérieur: "Je ne sais qui choisir... Il faut prendre de grandes précautions... Le père est vieux et maladif... La mère aussi; et les soeurs sont trop jeunes...".[25] By compelling the actor to follow a certain pattern of speech, Maeterlinck tried to assure that the verbal component of his personal vision was recreated for the audience in performance precisely as he had conceived it. (The Symbolist conception of the role of the actor is explored further in Chapter IV.)

Summary

The Idealist movement, of which Symbolism was both the poetic and the theatrical expression, tried to present an alternative to the increasingly secular and empirical art of nineteenth-century Europe. Theatrical Symbolism drew upon the ideas and influences of Idealist philosophy, and upon its own poetic tradition, as part of a deliberate conceptual restructuring of the drama. The form this drama should take was never precisely defined due to the individualistic approaches taken by Symbolist writers, but certain concepts seemed to be almost universally accepted: the purpose of the drama was to re-create and communicate the playwright's emotional/spiritual insight into the wonder and mystery of the universe; the presentation of this insight was to be through evocation

rather than description; the drama would embrace several arts appealing to more than one sense; these arts would be synthesized according to an overall purpose but subservient to the language of the playwright; the drama would unite all members of an audience in a common spiritual experience.

In its way, Symbolism was as socially-conscious as Realism, because of its perception of the theatre as an essentially communal experience; the "new" theatre was to be a place of spiritual renewal, through the response to the playwright's vision by the audience. The esthetic ideal of such a theatre would have been achieved when all the elements of a production were harmonized in a coherent presentation aimed at deeply and affectively evoking that vision in the audience. That response by the audience would have been the ideal "audience" component of the actor/audience relationship which this thesis seeks to define.

End Notes

[1]Aurélien Lugné-Poe, "Sur les soirées de 'l'Oeuvre'," La Plume 4 (September 1893; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 379; Camille Mauclair, "Notes sur un dramaturgie symbolique," La Revue indépendante 22 (March 1892): 309.

[2]Gertrude R. Jasper, Adventure in the Theatre: Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to 1899 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1947). p. 198.

[3]Jasper, pp. 9-10; Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), p. 238. For more on this theory, see Charles Baudelaire, "Expositions universelles de 1855, Beaux-Arts," Écrits esthétiques, pref. Jean-Christophe Bailly (Paris: Union générale d'Editions, 1986), pp. 245-46.

[4]Maurice Denis, Théories, 1890-1910. Du Symbolisme et de Gauquin vers un nouvel ordre classique, 4th ed. (Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920), p. 267.

[5]Jasper, p. 7.

[6]Published Symbolist poets who wrote plays for the Oeuvre included Maurice Beaubourg (L'Image, La Vie muette), Henri de Régnier (La Gardienne), and Pierre Quillard (L'Errante).

[7]Haskell M. Block, Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 12.

[8]Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), pp. 176-77.

[9]Maurice Maeterlinck, Intérieur, in Théâtre, 3 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1904), 2: 234. See also Maeterlinck, Le Trésor des humbles (Paris: Le Mercure de France, 1924), pp. 173-75, for more on his theory.

[10]Block, p. 34.

[11]Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris: E. Droz, 1934), p. 15.

[12]Stéphane Mallarmé, "Le Genre ou des modernes," Oeuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor and G.-Jean Aubrey (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), p. 313; Charles Morice, "A Propos du Théâtre d'Art," Le Mercure de France 7 (March 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 251.

[13]Mallarmé, p. 314.

[14]Henri de Régnier, "Mallarmé au théâtre," Journal des débats 7 (September 1908): 1-2.

[15]Charles Morice, "A Propos du Théâtre d'Art," Le Mercure de France 7 (March 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 251.

[16]Aurélien Lugné-Poe, La Parade: Souvenirs et impressions de théâtre, 4th ed., 4 vols., vol. 1: Le Sot de tremplin (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1930), p. 26.

[17]Block, p. 92.

[18]Camille Mauclair, "Notes sur une dramaturgie symbolique," La Revue indépendante 22 (March 1892): 310.

[19]Ibid., p. 311.

[20]Knowles, p. 237.

[21]Ibid., p. 415.

[22]Morice, p. 250.

[23]Jasper, p. 94.

[24]Richard Wagner, "The Destiny of Opera," Richard Wagner's Prose Works, trans. William Ashton Ellis, 8 vols., vol. 5: Actors and Singers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1892-1898; reprint ed., New York: Broude Brothers, 1966), pp. 150-51.

Chapter III: Performance Environment

Practical Limitations of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre

No matter what the style of theatre that one may choose to discuss, the interaction of actor with audience cannot occur in a vacuum. The theatre experience for audience and actor is profoundly affected by the environment in which the event takes place. "Environment" in this context embraces many elements: the sets and costumes used in performance; lighting; sound and other technical effects; the size, arrangement and general condition of the theatre in which a play is presented; even the attitudes and preconceptions which both the audience and the actors bring with them to the performance. Some of these elements of environment, particularly settings and technical effects, can be co-ordinated by the play-producers to help shape how a given performance is perceived and responded to by an audience. One would expect the coordination of set and technical elements to be particularly pronounced in a theatre influenced by Symbolism, which advocated harmonizing the component theatre arts in support of a single artistic vision. There is evidence that Lugné-Poe supported the principle of harmonizing set elements; he asserted that the greatest set designer is not so much an artist as

> un ajusteur panoramique, qui recréera au mieux sa compréhension de Munkaczy ou de Meissonier pour une vision commune, uniforme cependant, c'est-à-dire pour une théorie de regards différemment placés et artistes.[1]

Lugné's concern for proper sets for his shows is demonstrated by his frequent collaboration with his Nabis friends and their associates, who designed and painted many of the sets used by the Oeuvre.[2] Much of the design of sets and costumes at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was by Lugné himself; he remarked in later years that the art courses which he took in his youth at the École Germain Pilon proved of considerable use to him in designing for the Oeuvre.[3]

However, practical limitations of resources can cause an environment to fall short of the ideal conditions postulated by a given theory of art. Without considering the realities that Lugné-Poe was forced to accommodate, one cannot fairly evaluate the intent behind his interpretations of plays (or the success of those interpretations). Lugné's most pressing and chronic limitation was financial. Lugné could barely manage to finance one play at a time, and had to struggle to find a venue for each production; such spaces as he could rent or borrow frequently left much to be desired. Most of the programs from Lugné's first season were held at the Bouffes-du-Nord, on Boulevard de Lachapelle. According to Lugné's own description the theatre was poorly heated, the audience seating cramped and uncomfortable, and external noise was frequently audible in the theatre.[4] Such circumstances were almost certain to result in a restless and unresponsive audience, particularly when they were faced with an innovative experience requiring their active imaginative participation. After 1894, the most frequent performance site for the troupe was at the Nouveau-Théâtre, an annex of the Casino de Paris on rue de Clichy. The group of buildings making up the Casino dated from 1890, and the facilities were apparently clean and modern; nonetheless,

the distracting music of the "cancan" from the music hall was often audible in the theatre during performances.[5] (See Appendix B, Plate 1 for map locations for these two theatres.)

The Théâtre de l'Oeuvre could rarely afford elaborate sets or costumes. The Oeuvre's debut production of Rosmersholm in 1893 was played before the rebuilt and repainted pieces of second-hand sets belonging to the Bouffes-du-Nord, which were used for melodramas and other popular plays;[6] references to this play's sets and costumes by George Bernard Shaw in The Saturday Review during the Oeuvre's 1895 London tour do not indicate any significant improvement in their detail or realism.[7] For the first act of Björnstjerne-Björnson's Beyond Human Power (Au delà des forces humaines) in 1897, the set consisted of one chair and a bed.[8] In his generally laudatory review of the Oeuvre's 1896 Paris production of Peer Gynt, Shaw observed: "Many thousand pounds might be lavished on the scenery and mounting of 'Peer Gynt'. M. Lugné-Poe can hardly have lavished twenty pounds on it."[9] (See p. 52 for further proof of the poverty of settings in Peer Gynt.)

Because of his precarious finances, Lugné could not contract actors for an entire season, but had to hire them as best he could for each new play. Most of his actors were personal friends who were not necessarily trained actors. Lugné sometimes "borrowed" inexperienced actors from the Conservatoire, or the occasional professional under contract to another theatre (such as the Odéon) who for that reason could not stay long.[10] An inexperienced cast might have worked to the advantage of a strong director who could mold them into a coherent ensemble, as Antoine had at the Théâtre Libre, but the Oeuvre's high turnover would have made that

difficult at best.

The effect of these limitations on each area of production will be examined in detail in subsequent sections of this thesis, but there was another factor at work that had little to do with the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's financial situation, one which would have had a direct and detrimental effect on the kind of communal theatre experience that the Symbolists espoused: the attitude of the Oeuvre's audiences.

Audiences at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre

As pointed out in Chapter II, the ideal of a unifying spiritual experience was dear to Stéphane Mallarmé and others close to Lugné-Poe in the early days of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. Unfortunately for them, the audiences at the Oeuvre often fell short of that ideal. The issue of the proper form for the "drama of the future" seemed to polarize opinion among audiences as well as critics, leading to intense partisanship. The controversy came to centre on the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre as one of the two most daring and successful (along with the Théâtre Libre) of Paris's experimental theatres in the eighteen-nineties. Supporters and antagonists of the Oeuvre frequently tried to shout each other down during performances, such exchanges sometimes developing into mass shouting-matches which could only have disrupted the effects that Lugné was trying to create.[11]

The debate rarely dwelt on the qualities of the productions themselves, but rather on the scripts as literature, the philosophy or technique of Ibsen or Maeterlinck, or the rationale for producing

"foreign" (i.e. non-Gallic) dramas. Various political groups saw some of the new or foreign plays as supporting their views, and would turn out "en masse" in support; the debut of Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi attracted a raucous body of anarchists to its performance. Elements of some plays which challenged the sensibilities of the time provoked demonstrations which overwhelmed the performers; for instance, Ubu was disrupted by a prolonged outburst when the character of Père Ubu opened the play with the exclamation, "Merdre!"[12]

The rowdy badinage at performances by the Oeuvre company could only have been encouraged by the size of the audiences. Anyone who has attended an event as part of a large group (as in a concert or sporting contest) has seen or experienced the diminished inhibitions of people in a crowd. The trend in theatres in Europe at the end of the nineteenth century was toward more extensive audience-space, and the Nouveau-Théâtre could hold well over two thousand people according to reviewer Jacques des Gachons.[13] Many of the Symbolist-influenced playwrights attempted to "evoke" through understated, suggestive dialogue and low emotional energy; such subtle effects would not carry well in a more spacious theatre, at least not enough to hold an audience's interest for several hours.

The innovative nature of the Oeuvre theatre experience was at first greeted with considerable incomprehension. This would have been understandable if the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was attempting to evoke a Symbolist audience response, which the average Paris theatregoer was not conditioned for. Partisanship arose between those audience members who had some understanding of the methods and goals of the Oeuvre, and those who did not. As Haskell Block pointed out, "the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was

largely a coterie theatre, demanding an act of imaginative sympathy as well as a concern with subtleties and nuances that could only be the property of an initiated elite...".[14] In his later memoires Lugné-Poe acknowledged and even seemed to take delight in his group's elitism and the controversy that arose from it: "On voulut voir dans 'l'Oeuvre' un cénacle, après tant d'autres chapelles. On déclara que cette jeunesse ne cherchait d'autre plaisir que de mystifier les gens de bien."[15] However, many of Lugné's productions were preceded by introductory lectures to acquaint the audience with unusual or obscure features of the plays. Introductory lectures had been a common custom in France for decades,[16] and Lugné used them mostly for foreign works since French plays were considered more accessible to French audiences,[17] but obviously some effort was being made to "initiate" the general audience into the conventions of this new drama.

Sets and Costumes: Theory and Practice

The Realists and Naturalists habitually incorporated a wealth of detail in their sets and costumes. They sought both to encompass as complete an illusion of a real locale as possible and to enhance the audience's understanding of the circumstances that shaped their characters. While Realistic staging was primarily the result of intellectual conceptualization, Symbolism sought an emotional synthesis, a harmony between the staging and the dominant "spirit" of a play[18] -- "un décor émotif et sensationnel", as Mauclair puts it.[19] Visual and auditory effects should be "symbols" as Maurice Denis defined the term, having

qualities able to re-inspire the playwright's emotions or spiritual insights in an audience (see Chapter II, p. 30). As an example, Pierre Quillard suggests: "Le plus souvent il suffira de quelques draperies mobile, pour donner l'impression de l'infinie multiplicité du temps et du lieu."[20] The Symbolists rejected detailed sets and costumes as limiting a play to the world of material things; thus such details should be minimized.[21]

How closely productions at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre conformed to that view cannot be determined precisely. Remarks by various Nabis at the time imply that they supported the concept of integrating sets into the overall "idea" of the play, rather than making them independent works of art,[22] as Lugné himself advocated; but there are no surviving renderings of any of these artists' sets from which to evaluate their conformity to that concept. Jacques Robichez considered it significant that theatre critics of the eighteen-nineties remarked very little on the sets for most Oeuvre productions, implying that the set designers did indeed accept "la réserve" of the Symbolist theory toward the "ligne nette" and "détail anecdotique" of Realism.[23]

One of the clearer examples of a simplified set which served the "spirit" of a play was the Oeuvre's production of Maeterlinck's Intérieur. Gaston Danville's description of the opening of the play conveys the immediate air of "otherworldliness" evoked by the set: "Dans le jardin, empli de ténèbres, la façade d'une maison, seule, s'aperçoit..."[24] The set consisted of only two major playing areas: the garden downstage where "le Vieillard" and "l'Étranger" converse, and the family within the "house" upstage, visible to the audience only through the three windows in the

front of the house. Aside from basic accouterments to indicate what and where each playing space is "in reality", there is very little set detail given or necessary to the course of the play. (See Appendix B, Figure 1.) The subject of the play is the message borne by the two men that the eldest child of the family in the house has died, and its anticipated effect upon the family; the entire set embodies the contrast between the peaceful domestic tableau within the house, and the tragedy that waits outside to disrupt their peace.

The sparseness and generality of the set of Peer Gynt seems to have contributed to critic Henry Fouquier's complaint that the staging of the play left the demarcation between reality and fantasy indefinite.[25] In point of fact, the blending of fantasy with reality is a characteristic of the play itself. Peer moves without overt scepticism from encounters with Norwegian peasants and European businessmen, to others with trolls, the Devil and other supernatural personnages. There is an indication that Lugné-Poe's staging of the play may not have been a radical departure from previous productions: Lugné reportedly had to postpone his opening in order to obtain "documents" on an earlier staging of the play in Copenhagen.[26] It is not unreasonable to assume that a Symbolist approach to the staging of Peer Gynt would actually have been in harmony with the play, enhancing the unreal and fantastical qualities which it already possessed.

For Lugné-Poe the greatest "harmonie" in the staging of a play could be achieved through simplifying it, reducing unnecessary details and elaborate spectacle, particularly in the areas of decor and lighting:

> Pour l'instant, la plus grande simplicité, la plus élémentaire harmonie de fûts, par exemple, s'impose pour prouver déjà, de ce côté, que c'est bien nous qui possédons les principes primitifs de la lumière et de la décoration.[27]

It is true that the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre did occasionally stage more elaborate spectacles; Jarry's Ubu Roi featured such bizarre scenes as Père Ubu summarily dispensing justice upon his subjects (represented by a series of wicker mannequins) by pushing them through a trap door. However, these mannequins had been ordered by Jarry without Lugné's knowledge, although Lugné had to pay for them.[28] In this production Lugné's acquiescence to a more ornate setting was the result of the playwright's insistence (described in detail in Chapter 9 of Lugné's Acrobaties).

Some of the plays which Lugné-Poe chose to mount could have easily borne, and even have benefited by a reduction of detail in sets and effects. Henrik Ibsen's Rosmersholm bears all the structural and stylistic trademarks of Realistic drama, and the stage directions in the script contain Ibsen's typically detailed set descriptions. However, examination of the text of Rosmersholm reveals these descriptions to be almost totally on the order of environmental embellishment, enhancing the audience's appreciation of the play's setting but not advancing the action of the play. With the exception of doors, windows, and furniture (used in the mundanely expected ways), there is almost nothing in the way of set and properties essential to the play. In another example, one of the traditions of classical Hindu drama (such as Le Chariot de terre cuite) was the lack of scenery as modern Westerners would define it. Actors used narrative and pantomime to establish and describe their locations.[29] (An

outstanding example of this technique occurs in the aforementioned play when the Brahmin Maitreya visits the house of Vasantasena and richly describes each "court" within the house as he is led through them.[30]) The play's change of location between each of its ten acts would be difficult and time-consuming to simulate through changing all but the simplest props and set-pieces.

An argument could be made that poverty was the motivation for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's minimized decor. Lugné-Poe's memoirs describe the result of his financial extremity upon the staging of Chariot, particularly the costumes.[31] While sets received only rare notice in the critics' reviews of Oeuvre productions, the company's perceived shortcomings in costuming were a much more frequent target of criticism, even by supporters of the Oeuvre. Bernard Shaw disparaged Peer Gynt's costume as the Bedouin Prophet: "his caftan was an old dressing-gown, and his turban, though authentic, hardly new." Peer's revelry with the trolls in Act II was equally disappointing to Shaw: "A few pantomime masks, with allfours and tails, furnished forth the trolls in the Dovre scene..."[32]

It may have been an unfortunate side-effect of the Oeuvre's poverty that so many critics were distracted by perceived deficiencies in setting, because true "local colour" would not have been an objective of a Symbolist theatre. Costume and set would have been intended to evoke the "feel" of a particular time and place without simulating it. For example, the actors in the Oeuvre's famous Hindu dramas, Le Chariot de terre cuite and L'Anneau de Sakountala, were draped in lengths of cloth and the ubiquitous turban, and Lugné-Poe observed: "Le turban devint la synthèse, le symbole complet de costume des Hindous."[33] Lugné adopted a basic

"Scandinavian" costume for most of his roles in plays from those countries: a long frock-coat, stand-up collar and a highnecked vest buttoned to the chin.[34] (See Appendix B, Figure 2.) While maintaining "generic" costumes for these plays was certainly partly motivated by scarce capital, the end result was that costumes at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre were reduced to basic, minimal elements, often with symbolic connotations to the play in which they appeared. The same can be said of the sets created for the company, almost all of which featured minimized detail. While poverty doubtless contributed to the situation, the result was that the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, with few exceptions, conformed to the Symbolist principle of "minimalization" in stage setting -- an approach which would have conformed to Lugné's expressed preference for "simplifying" a production.

Light, Sound and Spectacle

It would be wrong to equate a "minimal" approach to staging with a total lack of spectacle. While much of the spectacle at the Oeuvre was actor-generated, another major source was the technical effects used in the staging of plays: music and sound, lighting, and special visual effects. It is in these areas that Lugné-Poe exhibited a consistent, deliberate esthetic orientation, one that clearly bears the mark of Symbolism's influence.

The burgeoning technical sophistication in Europe during the nineteenth century came to permeate the theatre, particularly the visual components of the stage, as it permeated so many other facets of life in

the Western world. For most of the century, however, its effect on drama was mainly cosmetic. With the exception of the popular melodrama, of which visual spectacle was already a major feature, the "legitimate" drama used the improvements in set construction, stage machinery and artificial lighting primarily to enhance stage illusionism and enrich the accuracy and detail of "local colour". Near the end of the century a new conception of technical effects began to manifest itself: that of the integration of technical elements into the overall conception of the drama.

The reviews of the Oeuvre's Paris productions by theatre critics for newspapers and literary journals (both foreign and domestic) often mentioned some feature of a production's technical effects. Examination of these reviews reveals the consistent influence of Symbolist-derived ideas on this element of staging. Contrary to common theatrical practice of the time, Lugné-Poe extinguished the lights in the audience part of the theatre during performances. This was not an innovation on his part, even within the Paris theatre community. The Théâtre Libre had been doing the same thing for several years, to focus audience attention on the illuminated stage, but Lugné all but extinguished the lights on stage as well. Most of the Oeuvre productions, particularly of Ibsen's plays, were shrouded in gloom.[35] One could consider this decision an attempt to visually represent and enhance the mood of a play, but given Lugné's application of the technique to many different plays it was more likely intended to add or bring out evocative qualities. Shadows would hide areas of the stage, hinting at mysterious forces just out of sight. The darkness would also obscure details of the set and the actors from the

audience, making them appear less "real" and "present".- The implication of mystery in darkness was an essential part of the scene from Act IV of Peer Gynt, in which Peer encounters the mysterious Boyg. For the Oeuvre performance of the scene the stage was completely dark (which was how Ibsen had written the scene); the audience could only hear "Peer howling, a strange voice squealing behind the scenes, a woman calling at intervals..." as Shaw described it.[36]

There are strong parallels between this style of stage lighting and the style of experimental painters of the same period, many of whom (including members of the Nabis) used contrasting areas of light and darkness to evoke visceral responses from viewers. (See Appendix B, Plate 2.) A theatrical analogy to this method appears in Maeterlinck's Intérieur, which explicitly contrasts the warmly lit interior of the house with the ominous shadows of the garden.

It should be no surprise that techniques of experimental painting manifested themselves in the staging at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. In addition to Lugné-Poe's personal connection to the Nabis and his own studies of art, there was free and frequent exchange of ideas among all the different arts of the Idealist movement, and the techniques of one artform would not infrequently parallel those of another. Lugné staged Henri de Régnier's La Gardienne behind a veil across the stage, blurring the audience's sight.[37] This was almost certainly an attempt to achieve the "distancing" of the stage world from the audience which Symbolism advocated, but some painters of the period believed that giving indefinite, misty contours to figures and objects would enhance their evocativity.[38] In that same Oeuvre production the only illumination was

a dim greenish glow over the stage,[39] indicating that Lugné was aware of the effectiveness of coloured light to enhance the "otherworldliness" of setting. The end of the century had seen a shift away from simulation in painting, in favour of the perception of art as the combination of discrete colours and lines. That concept was clearly well-entrenched among Idealist theorists in 1891 when Pierre Quillard asserted that the art of stage decor "complète l'illusion par des analogies de couleur et de lignes avec le drame."[40] By reducing stage setting to basic, minimal elements, the visual enhancement of the drama became more a matter of modifying the components of a setting, such as colour.

Music, song and dance were major components of Symbolism's "artistic synthesis", particularly for Stéphane Mallarmé.[41] Dance and music were another manifestation of "spectacle" at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, but they were not as universally applied as the lighting scheme,[42] nor do they appear to have been as closely integrated into the overall "spirit" of the production. For example, the Paris performance of Peer Gynt featured a score written for the Christiania production by Edvard Grieg; however, Lugné-Poe described the score as "la musique devant le rideau, pour des scènes que l'on peut supprimer ou alléger, telle celle d'Anitra, etc...".[43] Plainly the musical accompaniment for this play was largely incidental. The "Anitra" reference in the preceding quotation is to a character in Act IV who performs a dance for Peer's entertainment. The clearest indication of a lack of integration of these elements into the play can be found in Shaw's review, in which he laments the protraction of the performance due to "a good deal of silly encoring of Grieg's music," and actress/dancer Jane Avril's insistence upon an encore of her "Anitra" dance.[44] Lugné-

Poe's use of music seems to have been a case-by-case decision based on his interpretation of a play, whether or not a musical tradition existed for that play; although the Sanskrit drama used a drumbeat under the actors' voices to enhance the mood and meaning of their lines (in a manner analogous to a modern movie's musical score),[45] the Oeuvre performance of Le Chariot de terre cuite does not appear to have been musically accompanied at all.

Effect on the Actor

The techniques of staging at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre would have placed particular demands upon the actor, demands very different from those of the Realistic/Naturalistic drama. Plays of that school added much specific detail to their sets in an attempt to simulate reality. Implicitly, actors in that stage milieu must interact (handle, sit upon, pass through) the items in the set if they expect to appear "real" to an audience. Symbolist staging presents the actor with the opposite problem: he or she must generate most of the visual interest, define the form and limits of the performance space, with little or no material aid.

The generally dim illumination would have affected the actors' performance, as well: they would have had to place particular emphasis on the clarity of their movements and gestures for the meaning behind those actions to carry to the audience. The Oeuvre's lack of stage lighting may have actually hindered the actors' ability to communicate with the audience. In Henry Bataille's La Belle au bois dormant, the apparent reduction of the actors to little more than dim silhouettes on

stage made it almost impossible for them to use facial expression to clarify what they were trying to convey.[46] (This seems like an example of Lugné erring on the side of Symbolist doctrine.)

Given the relative barrenness of the stage, one might expect the actor's blocking to be comparatively active to compensate visually, but Jacques Robichez asserted that the Oeuvre's actors were often nearly immobile, especially during more intense scenes.[47] Critics of the period do not seem to have been concerned with stage movement as a separate issue since reviews contain no significant mention of it, but there is evidence to support Robichez's contention. Lugné-Poe advised actors in general to retain "bras ballants, geste immobile",[48] a personal lack of physical expressiveness which could logically extend to blocking. In the Christian tradition religious ritual featured stately processions and "tableaux" presented before the congregation at key points in the ceremony. Lugné's fondness for church ritual (see p. 36) could have led him to try to recreate that deliberate, largely static progression. Lugné was very much influenced by his Idealist painter friends during his early career, and it is quite reasonable to expect him to concentrate on a series of symbolic, painting-like stage tableaux. Reviewers of Oeuvre performances often referred specifically to beautiful or affective tableaux in particular plays, such as Peer's scene with his dying mother Aase in Peer Gynt, or the family's reaction to the news of the daughter's death in Intérieur, or Charudatta's greeting of the rebel prince Aryaka in Le Chariot de terre cuite (this last scene being a substitution for several incidents in the original play by its translator for the Oeuvre production, Victor Barrucand).[49] Such references hint that tableaux were

common, or at least especially featured, in those performances. The generally dim lighting of Lugné-Poe's plays would have rendered the lines and shapes of tableaux more important in communicating to the audience, since individual actors' expressiveness would have been somewhat obscured.

The exemplary plays chosen for this discussion are both appropriate to this type of blocking, and show the influence of Lugné's artistic choices in their actual presentation. Although its dialogue is more direct and colloquial than that typically employed by Symbolist playwrights, Rosmersholm is a predominantly verbal drama, featuring relatively static scenes of never more than four characters. Much of Peer Gynt focuses on the title character soliloquizing, a technically-uncomplicated image from the viewpoint of blocking. In addition, the scene in Act IV in which Peer visits the asylum in Cairo -- one of the most involved scenes in the play in its rapid introduction of characters -- was deliberately omitted from Lugné's acting version of the Paris production.[50] Although there could of course have been other editorial motives for this omission, the end result was a technically-simplified production.

While there are some physically active scenes in Chariot (and a few of almost slapstick comedy), the tradition of Hindu drama as known to Europeans in the eighteen-nineties emphasized actor immobility during intense scenes.[51] The performance of the play by the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre included a mob scene for much of the last act, and large crowds necessarily resist involved blocking. The very design of Intérieur requires essentially static blocking. The only visual foci within the downstage playing-space are three windows in the house and a bench in the

garden. The observers in the garden must be careful not to mask the audience's view of the house interior, while the silent performers within the house cannot move about extensively because the audience's sight lines are limited. (See Appendix B, Figure 1.).

It must be stressed that there are Symbolist rationales for such a blocking pattern. Symbolist drama was primarily verbal, and physical activity would have been seen as a distraction from the playwright's words. Symbolism aimed for a sense of spiritual ceremony, such as might be created through deliberate, stately movement. Lastly, and perhaps most important, Symbolism was a drama of evocation, meant to be manifested primarily through symbols; the use of tableaux by Lugné-Poe may have been an attempt to create visual "symbols", as his Nabis friend Maurice Denis attempted through painting. (See Chapter II, p. 32).

Summary

In addressing the staging of plays, Symbolist theory applied three main strictures: that the play be presented evocatively; that the various performance arts be "synthesized" into a single harmonious performance that would support the mood and meaning of the play; that the non-verbal elements be minimized to reduce their "distraction" from the playwright's words. Examination of Lugné-Poe's staging practices at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre indicates the consistent influence of these principles upon his practice, if not a precise conformity to them. Since Lugné was forced to discover or develop practical techniques to embody the spirit of Symbolist principles, often with limited means, it should not be surprising that he

sometimes ignored or contradicted the imprecise advice of the theorists.

The "artistic synthesis" achieved at the Oeuvre did not integrate music and dance to the degree that Mallarmé espoused, but the integration of lighting and decor with the "spirit" of the play seems to have been quite deliberate. The decor (including costume) can only be considered "minimized" (with a few exceptions due to specific circumstances). While the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's chronic poverty could explain it, this practice does correspond to Lugné's avowed preference for "simplification" of performance and technical effects; furthermore in its lack of individualistic detail, the Oeuvre's productions may have aimed for the universality that this technique was supposed to achieve. The evocativity of the sets is difficult to ascertain without extant reproductions -- although certain of the costumes used, such as the Hindu turban and Lugné's "Scandinavian" uniform, have definite symbolic qualities -- but lighting and visual spectacle at the Oeuvre clearly aimed at evocation.

Lugné-Poe's remarks about the responsibility of the set designer, and his concern over "appropriate" sets and costumes without corresponding concern for their verisimilitude, indicate his support for the principle of artistic synthesis in play staging.

The circumstances in which the actors of Lugné's troupe found themselves often presented them with significant obstacles in their attempt to establish a relationship with the audience. The audience's predisposition toward the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, and the size and quality of the theatres they performed in produced unavoidable distractions. On the other hand, the director himself was not free from blame: Lugné's swathing of so much of the stage in shadow, impeding audience

identification of and with the actors on stage, was a deliberate, theoretically sound but ultimately self-defeating choice. Yet it is clear that the actor was by default the principle vehicle for communicating the poet's vision to the audience. With minimized decor and technical effects and often static blocking, it was the actor's voice and gestures which defined space, created spectacle and embodied the playwright's words for the audience. While the other components of the production were calculated to support the actors' performance, that performance was the key to the audience's experience of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

End Notes

[1]Aurélien Lugné-Poe, "A Propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre'," Le Mercure de France 20 (October 1896; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 96-97.

[2]Vuillard, Bonnard, Ranson and Sérusier all contributed to the sets for Rosmersholm and Ubu Roi, while the set for Chariot was designed by Henri de Toulouse-Lautrec.

[3]"...l'histoire de l'art avec Darbaud, le modelage avec Gautard, la perspective de Rault, le dessin avec le père de mon camarade Hasti..." Lugné-Poe, La Parade: Souvenirs et impressions de théâtre, 4th ed., 4 vols., vol. 1: Le Sot de tremplin (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1930), p. 28.

[4]Lugné-Poe, La Parade: Souvenirs et impressions de théâtre, 4th ed., 4 vols., vol. 2: Acrobaties (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1931), pp. 47-49.

[5]Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), p. 375.

[6]Gertrude R. Jasper, Adventure in the Theatre: Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to 1899 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1947), p. 115.

[7]George Bernard Shaw, "L'Oeuvre," Dramatic Opinions and Essays, 2 vols. (New York: Bentano's, 1928), 2: 55-57.

[8]Robichez, p. 247.

[9]Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," Dramatic Opinions and Essays, 2 vols. (New York: Bentano's, 1928), 1: 105.

[10]Robichez, p. 371.

[11]Jasper, p. 272.

[12]Ibid., p. 198.

[13]Jacques des Gachons, L'Ermitage 14 (1897; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 59-60.

[14]Haskell M. Block, Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963), p. 127.

[15]Lugné-Poe, Acrobaties, p. 52.

[16]Robichez, p. 240.

[17]Ibid., p. 362.

[18]Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris: E. Droz, 1934), p. 247.

[19]Camille Mauclair, "Notes sur une dramaturgie symbolique," La Revue indépendante 22 (March 1892): 309.

[20]Pierre Quillard, "De l'Inutilité absolue de la mise en scène exacte," La Revue d'art dramatique 22 (May 1891; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971): 180-83.

[21]Knowles, p. 238.

[22]Paul Sérusier, Letter to B. Guinaudeau, La Justice (31 May 1892), quoted in Robichez, p. 248.

[23]Robichez, p. 247.

[24]Gaston Danville, Le Mercure de France 14 (April 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 99.

[25]Henry Fouquier, Le Figaro (Paris), 13 November 1896, p. 4; Paris: L'Association pour la conservation et la reproduction photographique de la presse (ACRPP), Gr Fo Lc 13 9, 1964.

[26]La France nouvelle (24 June 1896), cited by Jasper, p. 213.

[27]Lugné-Poe, "A Propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre'," p. 97.

[28]Lugné-Poe, Acrobaties, pp. 176-77.

[29]G.K. Bhat, Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama (Poona, India: Bhundarkar Oriental Research Institute), p. 99.

[30]Shudraka, The Toy Cart, in Great Sanskrit Plays in New English Transcreations, trans. P. Lal (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1964), pp. 125-26.

[31]Lugné-Poe, Acrobaties, pp. 121-22.

[32]Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," p. 105.

[33]Lugné-Poe, Acrobaties, p. 121.

[34]Robichez, pp. 246-47.

[35]Jasper, p. 166.

[38]Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," p. 108. See also Henrik Ibsen, Peer Gynt, trans. M. Prozor (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin et cie., 1912), pp. 82-85.

[37]Jasper, p. 149.

[38]G. Visinet, Le Journal de Rouen (22 June 1894), cited by Jasper, p. 149.

[39]Ivan Bouvier, Le Journal (22 June 1894), cited by Jasper, p. 149.

[40]Quillard: 181-82.

[41]Stéphane Mallarmé, "Les Fonds dans le ballet," Oeuvres complètes, ed. Henri Mondor and G.-Jean Aubrey (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945), pp. 307-9.

[42]Musically-accompanied plays directed by Lugné-Poe include Pelléas et Mélisande (before the official founding of the Oeuvre), Peer Gynt, La Belle au bois dormant and Brocéliande. See Appendix A for specifics of these plays.

[43]Lugné-Poe, Acrobaties, pp. 172-73.

[44]Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," pp. 99, 105.

[45]Bhat, p. 23.

[46]Jasper, p. 145.

[47]Robichez, p. 310.

[48]Lugné-Poe, "A propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre',": 96-97.

[49]Francisque Sarcey, Quarante ans de théâtre, 8 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque des Annales Politiques et Littéraires, 1902), 8: 369; Gaston Danville, Le Mercure de France 14 (April 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 99; A. Ferdinand Hérold, Le Mercure de France 13 (March 1895; reprint ed., Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 354.

[50]Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," p. 98.

[51]Sylvain Levi, Le Théâtre indien, p. 400, quoted in Robichez, p. 310.

Chapter IV: Symbolism in Performance

Focus on the Actor

Contemporary theatre, even in most nonrealistic modes, tends to view the actor as the active instigator of the audience's experience of a play, through the application of his talent and craft. Much of the final characterization and performance of a role is the actor's contribution, resulting from his analysis and exploration of the role. In contrast, the Symbolists feared the alteration of the writer's personal vision due to interpretation by the actor and wished to minimize it as much as possible. As Charles Morice emphasized, "Tout émane du poète et l'acteur lui doit l'obeissance passive."[1] Maurice Maeterlinck reportedly went so far as to propose replacing live actors with lifesize puppets so as to completely eliminate the "filtering" of the drama through human minds.[2] The rhythms and pauses which Maeterlinck wrote into his dialogue (see p. 39) manifested his concern for control of the actor, his attempt to compel the actor to perform a play "as written" without interpretation.

Nonetheless, defining the function of the actor at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre is the key to comprehending how the Symbolist esthetic could have been applied there because the actor had to have been the primary vehicle for conveying the playwright's intention to the audience. As the preceding chapter of this thesis illustrates, both Symbolist doctrine and

Lugné's practice tended to minimize physical elements of set and spectacle. This left the actor as the principle focus of the audience's attention, and the most flexible means of expression on stage.

The Symbolists envisioned a theatre of evocation, where the emotional and spiritual insights of the playwright would be recreated, or perhaps "re-inspired" in the audience without the intervention of the intellectual process. Such a form of theatre would seem to require its own "language of expression", but the Symbolist theorists had provided would-be directors with precious little description of an appropriate technique for the actor.

The responsibility for developing this language of expression at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre would have fallen primarily to Lugné-Poe. Since the director as interpreter of a play had not yet become a common fixture in Europe of the eighteen-eighties and -nineties, the theorists failed to account for a director's influence on their plays. Lugné-Poe as director of the Oeuvre was clearly more than a passive purveyor of other people's words. Lugné collaborated quite actively on most of the new dramas written for his theatre (the fact that few of these young writers had any theatre experience must have enhanced his influence on their work, at least in the beginning). Foreign works translated and/or adapted for the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre were regularly edited either before or during the rehearsal, mostly for production reasons: to shorten an impracticably lengthy play (several scenes in Peer Gynt were reduced or removed, including Peer Gynt's entire journey to Egypt in Act IV);[3] to eliminate elements of the play's cultural background that the French audience would not understand, such as Charudatta's acceptably polygamous relationship

with both his wife and the courtesan Vasantasena in Le Chariot de terre cuite;[4] or to make a play text simpler and livelier and thus more suitable to a French audience's taste.[5]

Thus the application of Symbolism at the Oeuvre would have depended on Lugné-Poe's intent. There is at least one apparent example of deliberate accordance of Lugné's use of his actors with Symbolist principles: his production of La Gardienne by Henri de Régnier in June 1894, in which performers on stage mimed the action of the play while others read the characters' lines aloud from beyond the audience's sight (almost like human versions of Maeterlinck's "marionnettes"). This technique would have "distanced" the performance from the audience's familiar frame of reference, but it would also have reduced the performers' ability to emotionally identify with and interpret their characters by separating the physical and the vocal components of those characters. (This point will be elaborated upon in the following section on characterization). It should be noted that La Gardienne was a play from the Oeuvre's first season; since Lugné was in his early twenties at the time, one can reasonably assume that his artistic philosophy evolved with further experience. Certainly by 1895 his perception of the actor's importance to the creative process was more generous than that of most Symbolists: "Il deviendra l'*Acteur*, le *Personnage*, reconstituant par son talent ou son génie les efforts de communion que l'auteur tente entre lui et le spectateur."[6] This remark implies reliance on the actor's abilities (although it does not necessarily imply freedom to interpret), but it also emphasises the "communion" between the author and the spectator, the most important consideration for the Symbolist writers.

As important as Lugné's intent was his ability and willingness to fulfil that intent. There appear to have been occasions on which the performance style of the cast was not uniform, as in the Oeuvre's debut of Rosmersholm; after praising the performance of Lugné-Poe and several other members of the cast, reviewer Alfred Vallette observed: "M. Generis (le recteur Kroll) et Charny (Mortensgaard), qui détonnèrent point trop dans l'ensemble, rappelèrent encore pourtant le jeu 'classique'."[7] Jacques Robichez accused Lugné-Poe of being a "laissez faire" director, maintaining irregular hours and generally lax discipline,[8] yet even Robichez admitted the problems Lugné faced in gathering and holding a strong ensemble attuned to his methods. Even taking this limitation into account, a true Symbolist orientation on the part of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre should have been manifested in recognizable patterns in the director's and actors' approach to characterization and performance technique.

Characterization

To understand the definition of "character" within Symbolist dramatic theory, one must recall two of the main goals of the movement: the representation of universal themes and forms not tied to specific time or place; and the embodiment of the mysterious forces in the universe.

Character in contemporary Realistic drama is a direct outgrowth of nineteenth-century Realism and Naturalism. The individual character is seen as the synthesis of behavioural traits with their bases in the character's past (up until the time of the beginning of the play), and

therefore definable and explicable. Defining and explaining why a character thinks and acts as he does is crucial to a Realistic actor's ability to interpret a role. He can apply that understanding to finding a way to present each line and action as the most "real" and "true" to the character.

Symbolism aimed to embody the universal mystery in characters by presenting them as archetypes or living concepts dominated by one trait or emotion, or simply one function within the play. This principle seems to underlie Camille Mauclair's recommendations regarding the type of characters appropriate to "le drame poétique": "Incarner ces entités ["philosophiques et intellectuelles"] en des personnages surhumains...destinés à symboliser des sentiments ou des idées...". In a Symbolist context "surhumain" most likely meant that the character represented concepts beyond the mundane concerns and interactions of human beings -- "la splendeur de l'idée pure", as Mauclair puts it.[9] Thus the title characters in Maeterlinck's Pelléas et Mélisande are love, in that they exist in the play only to fall in love with each other, spontaneously and without explanation or justification. They exhibit little personality or volition outside of this situation.

Maurice Maeterlinck often gave his characters suggestive, generalized and archetypal names: in Intérieur we have "Le Vieillard", "L'Étranger", "Le Père", and so on. In addition to their philosophical implications, these names also helped to "de-specify" the characters. Maeterlinck hoped to achieve a drama that would speak to people everywhere for all time, by stripping his characters of everything but the most universal characteristics and emotions. His characters were only "individual"

enough to have recognizable human reactions.[10] The critical success of Maeterlinck's early plays led other young playwrights to imitate his mode of characterization as they had his style of language, rarely with anything approaching his success. (This in itself may help account for theatrical Symbolism's reputation for monotony, inscrutability and lack of dramatic interest).

The Symbolists' essential indifference to characterization may not be causally related to their denigration of the actor's function, but the one probably contributed to the other. Minimal characterization would greatly reduce an actor's emotional identification with his role, thus reducing the likelihood of the actor's personal feelings and biases influencing his performance. The actor could not approach his role from the perspective of character analysis as Realistic performers customarily do. The key to characterization within Symbolist theatre seems to lie with the primacy of the playwright's vision as manifested through his language. Because he was not seen as an independent creator, the actor's participation in the "sacred rite" generated by the playwright would have been on the same responsive level as that of the audience. The words of the play would "re-inspire" both actor and audience. One can surmise that the theorists' intention was for the actors to immerse themselves in the poet's language, allowing it to control them in their manifestation of the higher reality. Thus they would be as much a recipient of the poet's vision as the audience.

As has been indicated at other points in this thesis, Intérieur is fairly typical of Maeterlinck's Symbolist drama, so much so that the reviewer for Le Mercure de France claimed that "[Il] n'offrait pas grand

intérêt à être traité à nouveau."[11] The text of the play shows itself Symbolist in its relative unconcern for the background of the characters. All but the two daughters of "Le Vieillard", "Marie" and "Marthe", bear non-specific names. The family of the dead girl, who we see through the window of their house, are played mute and simply go through their normal domestic pastimes, until the old man informs them of the recent tragedy. They are there solely to create an essence of familial harmony for the audience in contrast with their devastation following the news. The two main speaking roles comment on the family's happiness and how it must soon be broken, and how close all the members of the family have been, but give us little other information about them, or themselves.

The speaking cast in the Oeuvre production tried to convey the horror and pathos of the situation through "les voix effarées et les gestes hagards, comme il convenait" according to Gaston Danville.[12] Both the text and the reviews imply that the characters remained on very simple emotional levels throughout the play.

Ibsen's Rosmersholm would appear on the surface to be the opposite of Intérieur in terms of character. The play features rounded and sharply-drawn characters with extensive and pertinent backgrounds, who progress through their revelations and reversals in the linear manner typical of Realistic drama. The detailed descriptions of the characters which Ibsen mailed to Hans Schroeder, director of the Christiania (modern Oslo) Theatre, during pre-production of the play in 1887 show the depth of detail in which Ibsen conceived of them.[13]

Nonetheless, there are implications in the play that the characters represent or are influenced by mysteries beyond the rationally explicable.

The Rosmersholm housekeeper observes that children at Rosmersholm never cry, nor do they laugh when they grow up.[14] Rebecca West, who has wrought such a profound change in John Rosmer's thought and attitude, has come out of an uncertain past from Finmark, reputed in the myths of the Scandinavians to be a land of magic and sorcerers.

Despite their apparent complexities, the characters of Rosmer and Rebecca are dominated by one quality, passion. It is their extravagant passion that compels them to commit suicide together to prove their love and to expiate their guilt over Rosmer' wife's death. The Oeuvre productions of Rosmersholm seem to have emphasized that quality: when their touring company performed Rosmersholm in Christiania in 1894 -- a performance attended by Ibsen himself -- Ibsen reportedly praised Lugné-Poe's company, telling them that he was an author of passion and that the French were best suited to perform his plays passionately.[15] Yet when Alfred Vallette reviewed Lugné's performance as John Rosmer in the Paris debut of the play, he remarked: "Il fut personellement parfait, d'une sobriété admirable, et conserva fermete congrue là où il était à craindre qu'on nous donnât un Rosmer veule."[16] The emphasis of this description is on restraint and controlled strength, implying that the "passion" presented was balanced by discipline, perhaps manifested through controlled performance technique.

The title character of Ibsen's Peer Gynt is not dominated by any single emotion or element of personality; he is in fact motivated by many conflicting impulses, a man whom critic Ferdinand Hérold called "l'homme des demi-mesures".[17] Nonetheless, Peer's passivity and shallow involvement in the lives of those he meets represent his decision not to become part

of them, simply "to be himself" ("*at vaere sig selv*" in Norwegian[18]). That portentous phrase recurs throughout the play, and becomes the issue of contention in Peer's attempt to save his soul from being "recycled" by the Button Moulder. To a large extent Peer Gynt symbolizes that attribute of "being oneself", that decision and its outcome.

Lugné-Poe apparently did not develop the other characters beyond appropriate "types". Peer's mother Aase was "too much the stage crone" according to Bernard Shaw,[19] while Romain Coolus described Suzanne Auclair's portrayal of Solveig as the 'perfect 'petite fiancée' norvegienne",[20] and little mention was made of the rest of the cast. Most of the responsibility for this falls to Ibsen himself. The majority of his characters in Peer Gynt are little more than cameos, and several of them, such as the trolls and the Button Moulder, are living symbols performing limited functions in the play. Plainly aware that the play revolves around Peer Gynt, Lugné displayed great care when he cast Abel Deval in the role of Peer:

> Pour Peer Gynt, d'abord, je me souviens de mon vieux camarade Bouleran-Deval, dont la gaie et retorse roublardise, ainsi que le cynisme de don Juan provincial, pouvaient, dans une certaine mesure, s'apparenter au *skoeioer* norwégien.

Lugné later defines the Norwegian word "*skoeioer*" as "le hableur normand, blagueur...". Despite Peer's complexities, the young director was very concerned with a few broad qualities belonging to a certain "type"; yet he also looked for something beyond a simple representation of a type, something which seems to belong to the realm of evocative, poetic drama: "Si Deval n'avait aucun don poétique, il donnerait néanmoins une certaine illusion."[21]

The Sanskrit drama tended toward the portrayal of idealized character types.[22] The Brahmin Charadutta, one of the two protagonists in Le Chariot de terre cuite, is the most obvious example of an elevated ideal of human behaviour. Once wealthy, he has beggared himself by helping his friends. When the fugitive prince Aryka enters the play, Charudatta does not hesitate to hide him from his pursuers. After enumerating the character's qualities in his review of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's production of the play, Ferdinand Hérold goes on to praise the restrained performance of the actor playing the role: "M. Ripert, noble et simple, a très bien compris et parfaitement joué le rôle de Carudatta...".[23]

Not all characters in Sanskrit drama are idealized, however, although all are supposedly classed according to characteristics and function in the play. Hérold points out that the heroes in these plays are required to have a confidant of a comical nature, the "vidûshaka", "un brahmane peureux et gourmand".[24] The Brahmin Maitreya serves this function in Le Chariot. Yet The Clay Cart is unique compared to other "great" plays produced by the same culture in that it also features some relatively individualized characters. That Lugné-Poe's interpretation did not ignore those elements of the play is indicated in the review by Henri Tourade of Marcel Deslouis's performance as the "villain" Samsthanaka: "...quelle saisissante vérité dans le portrait du prince, pervers et timide, sournois et malfaisant, cruel et souple, redoutable et faible!"[25]

All of the plays cited in the above examples feature characters which lend themselves to a Symbolist interpretation, and the evidence suggests that Lugné-Poe did interpret them in that way to some extent. On the other hand, with the exception of Intérieur these characters did not

conform precisely to the standards of Symbolism, nor does Lugné appear to have been rigorous in imposing those standards. If, as so many sources have claimed, the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was Symbolist in its orientation, that orientation must lie predominantly in its performance esthetic -- within the realm of actor technique, the physical and verbal manifestation of the esthetic.

Actor Technique

The natural rivalry between André Antoine's Théâtre Libre and Lugné-Poe's Théâtre de l'Oeuvre prompted many comparisons between them by critics of the period and their successors. Dorothy Knowles identified acting-style as one of the key distinctions between the Oeuvre and the Théâtre Libre, even for respective productions of the same play: "Son [Lugné-Poe] jeu différait entièrement de celui de M. Antoine dans ces mêmes pieces: l'un tâchant de leur donner une représentation symbolique, l'autre ne voyant que leur réalisme patent."[26] This observation reflects an opinion generally held by scholars who have studied the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre (including Jacques Robichez, Haskell Block and Gertrude Jasper) that there was a particular "style" of performance associated with Lugné-Poe's company.

Part of that style probably grew naturally out of the new Symbolist-inspired plays themselves. Some of the more skilful writers of Symbolist persuasion, particularly Maeterlinck, built rhythms, repetitions and silences into their dialogue, forcing actors to conform to a certain pattern of speech. Maeterlinck also favoured simple but apparently-

portentous dialogue, such as this observation by "Le Vieillard" in Intérieur on the soon-to-be bereft family: "Ils se croient à l'abri... Ils ont fermé les portes; et les fenêtres ont des barreux de fer...".[27] Dialogue of this style almost demands a special emphasis, something to imply the deeper meaning behind it. Perhaps because of his early exposure to Maeterlinck, Lugné-Poe tried to evoke that sense of underlying mystery from the dialogue of other plays, particularly the plays of Ibsen. In rehearsing The Master Builder ("Solness le constructeur") in 1894, Lugné found that "la pièce offrait dans différentes scènes quelques-unes de ces cavernes de l'âme humaine...sur lesquelles Maeterlinck s'était penché dans une chronique sur le *Tragique quotidien*."[28]

According to A. Dikka Reque, Lugné-Poe declared that his "interprétations un peu exagérées" had borrowed from German romantic acting, which was applied in the German theatre to Ibsen in particular.[29] During an Oeuvre performance of The Master Builder ("Solness le constructeur") in Paris, critic Francisque Sarcey had the German tradition explained to him by "un des hommes qui sont à Paris le plus au courant du théâtre allemand":

> on fait peu de mouvements, presque point de gestes, et tous larges, hiératiques presque; on enveloppe toute la diction d'une mélopée lente, qui semble tomber de lèvres surnaturelles et symboliques[30]

Whether deliberate or coincidental, Lugné's thoughts on physical expression correspond to the above description of the German tradition in minimizing the actor's movement, and in the power of movement to evoke the abstract: "[The actor] comprendra vite que la multiplicité des gestes est odieuse, que s'il parvient à donner une forme d'art à l'abstraction qu'il incarne, il doit réserver l'effet et l'abandonner".[31]

The use of the actors' voice in the German tradition describes a type of stylization designed to add symbolic qualities to the dialogue, in terms remarkably similar to those applied by critics to performances by the Oeuvre. A review of those play critiques reveals that, aside from their choice of plays, it was the Oeuvre company's use of voice to suggest underlying depths of meaning that drew the most attention and controversy. Gaston Danville mentioned the "voix effarées" of the actors in Intérieur.[32] George Bernard Shaw commented on Suzanne Auclair's performance as Solveig of the last scene in Peer Gynt, "which she chanted in a golden voice...".[33] Henry Fouquier, the less-than-supportive critic for Le Figaro, described Lugné's diction in Little Eyolf ("Petit Eyolf") as "une voix 'mate'", and the general style of the company's performance in Jean Gabriel Borkman thusly: "Le discours d'Ibsen est alourdi par des répétitions, des suspensions de phrases, des allusions obscures à des pensées inexprimées. On aggrave la chose en psalmodiant".[34] (Comments such as the last line imply a religious, ceremonial quality reminiscent of the theatre of Mallarmé.) During rehearsals for Lugné's first Paris production of Rosmersholm, Herman Bang, playwright and Ibsen's friend who was helping the virgin Théâtre de l'Oeuvre prepare for its debut, complained, "Tu chantes!" in response to the diction of Lugné-Poe.[35] This complaint hints at the quality of music which Lugné was trying to infuse into his performance.

These descriptions of the Oeuvre vocal style all correspond to Lugné-Poe's own description of the technique his company used to bring out the deeper qualities which they perceived in plays: "on 'melopait', on chantait."[36] The labels and adjectives applied to descriptions of this

style -- hollow, blank, chanting, singing -- all imply a stylization meant to endow the lines of a play with underlying import. The style is reminiscent of the vocal techniques of the ancient Greek theatre beloved by Mallarmé and his disciples. Lugné seems to have attempted to endow his actors with a stately "classical" elevation implying matters of vast import only glimpsed by the audience. That this quality was primarily embodied verbally is a telling argument in support of a Symbolist perception of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre.

On the other hand, reviews of Oeuvre productions give evidence of at least occasional exceptions to this style of acting, as with two of the cast members in the Oeuvre debut of Rosmersholm, and the characterization of Samsthanaka in Le Chariot. (See pages 69 and 75, respectively.) During the performance of Peer Gynt Bernard Shaw made special mention of Lugné's accurate imitation of an Englishman's French accent,[37] which could only have been deliberate. The question is not whether the style was used, but why it was not used uniformly. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Jacques Robichez attributed inconsistencies in performance among Oeuvre cast members to Lugné's "laissez-faire" directing style and his difficulties in maintaining an ensemble troupe, but that explanation does not cover those occasions on which Lugné-Poe appears to have deliberately chosen more realistic acting and characterization.

As with his conception of the role of the actor (see p. 68), Lugné-Poe's philosophy of performance evolved over the years of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's existence, especially regarding the Scandinavian drama which he championed. Rehearsals for Rosmersholm saw a conflict between the young director and cast, who clearly wanted to expand upon the poetic

qualities of the play, and Herman Bang, who struggled to steer them toward a more realistic interpretation. As Lugné observed, "De fait nous inclinions vers le poème et Bang voyait direct." However, he later asserts that Bang "eut toujours raison, même quand il voyait trop vrai."[38] Lugné-Poe gave much of the credit for the critical and popular success of the production to Bang. During a tour of Christiania the following year, in 1894, Lugné became converted (apparently) to a less Symbolist interpretation of the play:

> Ibsen, en une seconde, par une parole, avait modifié tout le caractére jusque-là languissant et un peu chantant de notre interprétation. Toutefois, ce ne fut que deux ans plus tard que la modification devint totale.[39]

Yet when we look ahead two years, Suzanne Auclair is still using a chanting speech-pattern in Peer Gynt. In Henry Fouquier's review of Jean Gabriel Borkman in 1898, we find the critic describing the techniques of performance stylization we have already discussed, prefaced as follows: "L'oeuvre remarquable de M. Ibsen est jouée dans le système ordinaire à M. Lugné Poe."[40]

Disregarding sloppy direction by Lugné-Poe (and his critical successes and reputation give at least some justification to do so), we are left with the possibility that Lugné was applying his performance esthetic selectivity. In a number of scenes in Peer Gynt, and to a lesser extent in Rosmersholm, the "higher reality" of the supernatural intrudes into the natural world. The change in performance style could thus be seen as the manifestation of that contact with the higher reality. Certain scenes or passages which seemed particularly symbolic would have their "deeper" qualities brought out through evocative acting, in a manner

comparable to alterations of sets and lighting to create heightened effects.

End Notes

[1]Charles Morice, "A Propos du Théâtre d'Art," Le Mercure de France 7 (March 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 251.

[2]Gertrude R. Jasper, Adventure in the Theatre: Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to 1899 (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1947), p. 94.

[3]A. Ferdinand Hérold, Le Mercure de France 20 (December 1896; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 605-6.

[4]Paul Gruyer, La Revue d'art dramatique 37 (1895; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971): 204-5.

[5]Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au Théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre (Paris: L'Arche, 1957), pp. 236-37.

[6]Aurélien Lugné-Poe, "A Propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre'," Le Mercure de France 20 (October 1896; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 97.

[7]Alfred Vallette, Le Mercure de France 9 (November 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 278.

[8]Jacques Robichez, Lugné-Poe (Paris: L'Arche, 1955), pp. 56-57.

[9]Camille Mauclair, "Notes sur un essai de dramaturgie symbolique," La Revue indépendante 22 (March 1892): 309.

[10]Dorothy Knowles, La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890 (Paris: E. Droz, 1934), p. 174.

[11]Gaston Danville, Le Mercure de France 14 (April 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 99.

[12]Ibid.

[13]Henrik Ibsens Brevveksling med Christiania Theatre 1878-1899, ed. with a commentary by Oeyvind Anker, trans. and quoted in Michael Meyer, Introduction to Rosmersholm, by Henrik Ibsen (London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1966), pp. 19-20.

[14]Henrik Ibsen, Rosmersholm, trans. M. Prozor (Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin et cie., 1904), pp. 274-75.

[15]Lugné-Poe, "Souvenirs sur Henrik Ibsen," La Revue hebdomadaire (March 1928), p. 409.

[16]Vallette, p. 278.

[17]Hérold, p. 602.

[18]Michael Meyer, Introduction to Peer Gynt, by Henrik Ibsen (New York: Doubleday and Co., 1963), p. 24.

[19]George Bernard Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," Dramatic Opinions and Essays, 2 vols. (New York: Bentano's, 1928), 2: 105.

[20]Romain Coolus, La Revue blanche 11 (1896; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 526-27.

[21]Lugné-Poe, La Parade: Souvenirs et Impressions de théâtre, 4th ed., 4 vols., vol. 2: Acrobaties (Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1931), p. 173.

[22]P. Lal, Introduction to Great Sanskrit Plays in New English Transcreations (Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1964), p. 15.

[23]Hérold, Le Mercure de France 18 (March 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 354.

[24]Ibid.

[25]Henri Tourade, La Petite république (24 January 1895), quoted in Jasper, p. 204.

[26]Knowles, p. 142.

[27]Maurice Maeterlinck, Intérieur, in Théâtre, 3 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1904), 2: 244.

[28]Lugné-Poe, "Souvenirs sur Henrik Ibsen," p. 404.

[29]A. Dikka Reque, Trois auteurs dramatiques Scandinaves: Ibsen, Bjornson, Strindberg devant la critique Française 1889-1901 (Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1930; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1976), p. 50.

[30]Francisque Sarcey, Quarante ans de théâtre, 8 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque des Annales Politiques et Littéraires, 1902), 8: 357.

[31]Lugné-Poe, "A Propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre'," p. 97.

[32]Danville, p. 99.

[33]Shaw, p. 104.

[34]Henry Fouquier, Le Figaro (Paris), 9 May 1895, p. 3; 12 November 1897, p. 4; Paris: L'Association pour la conservation et la reproduction photographique de la presse (ACRPP), Gr Fo Lc 13 9, 1964.

[35]Lugné-Poe, "Souvenirs sur Henrik Ibsen," p. 401.

[36]Lugné-Poe, "Ibsen et son public," La Revue bleue, ser. 5, 2 (July 1904): 101.

[37]Shaw, p. 104.

[38]Lugné-Poe, "Souvenirs sur Henrik Ibsen," p. 403.

[39]Ibid., p. 410-11.

[40]Reque, p. 50.

Conclusion

It is possible to define the esthetic ideal of the Symbolist theatre movement as the harmony of all the elements of a stage production in evoking a deep emotional, spiritual response from the audience. (See Chapter II, p. 40). However, when one recalls the degree to which Symbolism was a language-oriented drama, harmonizing those elements is a much simpler matter than it at first appears. In theory Symbolist plays were dominated by the words of the playwright/poet, the primary vehicle of his vision. Stage decor was to be minimized to reduce audience "distraction" from the essence of the words. Thus the burden of conveying the writer's intentions to the audience fell almost solely upon the actor, the speaker of the words. How the actor related to the audience -- how he helped bring about the ideal audience response -- was even more crucial to the Symbolist theatre than to many other genres.

The Symbolists strove for an evocative, unifying audience experience as affective as a religious ritual. This concept differed from the empathy of Realism in that it was not individual and personal; one was not meant to identify with specific characters purely on a "one-to-one" level. Another major Symbolist precept was that of universality of theme and subject, which was manifested through "simple" characters motivated by one dominant idea or emotion. The end result of these principles is that an actor preparing for such a role could not determine an "appropriate" or

"true" performance through emotional identification with a character. Nor could he approach the character with the intellectual objectivity of Brecht's Epic theatre since the insights he was trying to convey were deeply emotional, supposedly beyond the rationally explicable. (Certainly the Symbolist playwrights tried to write instinctively without rationalizing their ideas). This left the actor (and director) with the problem of finding a way to express these insights through performance.

The approach taken by Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre was to concentrate on the language of the plays themselves, which would have been a natural approach for a Symbolist theatre. The Oeuvre actors sought out the "cavernes de l'âme humaine" in a playwright's lines, those portions of a play where the writer seemed to imply depth beyond the surface meaning of the words (see p. 77). The terms in which Lugné expressed this process indicate that it was essentially an instinctive recognition of a quality of the language rather than a rationalized interpretation. The technique that the Oeuvre actors used to manifest such qualities was usually described (by Lugné-Poe and by reviewers of his productions) as "singing" or "chanting", terms with obvious similarities to liturgy and classical Greek theatre. The technique is too stylized to be a reflection in performance of the emotions of "real" characters, but seems to have been too broadly applied to different plays to have reflected unique, rationalized interpretations of specific lines and passages.

The Oeuvre actors used this vocal stylization (and perhaps, to a lesser extent, stylization of gesture and movement) where they instinctively sensed symbolic qualities in the playwright's dialogue. They were not so much interpreters of the play as respondents to it, as

was the audience. This was the heart of the "communal experience" which Symbolism aspired to: both actors and audience responding instinctively to the playwright's vision, and sharing that response during performance.

Esthetically the response should have ben highly emotional, but not the personal identification with individualized characters that prevailed in Realism, nor the emotional aggression and confrontation of Artaud's "theatre of cruelty". The singing and chanting of the actors, the structured meter and stresses in many Symbolist plays, the influence of Wagner and classical Greece, imply the emotional suggestiveness of music. While the actors of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre were not exactly the passive "instruments" of the playwright, they were attempting to perform in instinctive response to his language so that their performance might evoke the same response in those who viewed it.

The esthetic relationship of actor to audience defined above would have been appropriate to a theatre dedicated to dramatic Symbolism, and there is considerable evidence that such an esthetic was evoked at the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre. However, one must reconcile the concept of a deliberate esthetic orientation on the part of Lugné-Poe and his company with the previously-noted inconsistencies in performance. As pointed out in the preceding chapter, there were performances by actors in certain scenes which seemed highly stylized and evocative, while others appeared to be in a very different style. Some of these apparent inconsistencies in performance seem to have been deliberately chosen.

One explanation for the observed phenomena is that practical limitations prevented Lugné-Poe from fully executing his artistic intentions. This argument is doubtless valid to some extent, but it does

not adequately explain Lugné's deliberate imitation of an Englishman's accent in Peer Gynt, or the apparently individualized, "realistic" portrayal of Samsthanaka in Le Chariot de terre cuite. Neither does it justify Lugné's perpetuation of his distinctive style in productions of Ibsen's plays years after he had claimed to have discarded a "poetic" approach to them. (This fact would also tend to exclude a gradual evolution of Lugné's thought and practice as the sole cause of the inconsistency).

When considering Lugné-Poe's assertions about his artistic philosophy, especially in his twentieth-century memoirs, one cannot discount a certain amount of self-serving historical revision. Symbolism's brand of poetic drama had failed to sustain itself into the twentieth century. Other experimental theatre movements, such as Dadaism, Surrealism and Expressionism had succeeded it as opponents of the increasingly successful Realistic theatre. It is not difficult to imagine Lugné trying to distance himself from association with a discredited dramatic genre. While one must give some credence to Lugné's repeated assertions that contact with Ibsen and Herman Bang had prompted an evolution in his artistic theory, that evolution was obviously not as rapid or complete as Lugné later implied.

Whatever the degree to which Lugné's approach changed, it is unlikely that it changed to resemble true Realism in acting. That was the orientation of Antoine's Théâtre Libre, and Ibsen had withdrawn his support for performance of his plays there partly due to his dissatisfaction with Antoine's Naturalistic interpretation of them. Given this precedent and Ibsen's immediate approval of the Oeuvre's

interpretation of Rosmersholm, the playwright's granting of the sole performance rights of his plays to Lugné as of 1896 implies that Lugné-Poe's interpretation continued to be different from Antoine's.

One must keep in mind that the Symbolists did not see themselves as diametrically opposed to "realism" in the broad sense of the term. (One of their contentions was that their approach brought higher "reality" to the theatre). In the eighteen-nineties "realism" of performance had not yet become synonymous in the public mind with organized Realism and Naturalism, and a performance could have been viewed as realistic without precise conformity to the techniques of those movements. The variations in Lugné's performance esthetic were probably quantitative rather than qualitative. For example, George Bernard Shaw commented specifically on the chanting by the actress playing Solveig in the final act of Peer Gynt, and on the unusual vocal manifestations when Peer encounters the demonic Boyg in Act IV of that play.[1] The implication is that there was a selective intensification of the performance style in scenes which appeared to the Oeuvre performers to possess a greater depth of mystery or evocativity. Similarly, the modifications by Lugné of his performance as Master Cotton in Peer Gynt, and by the actor portraying Samsthanaka in Le Chariot, need not have been radical departures from the style of production as a whole. (In any event both of these characters were at least partly comical, and a change in the style of performance to provide "comic relief" is a theatrical tradition of very long standing). Such a stratagem would seem to anticipate experiments in blending of artistic styles by some postmodern drama, but since the modifications by the Oeuvre cast were essentially quantitative they need not have violated the unity

of the production. The Oeuvre troupe gradually moved away from uniform application of its characteristic performance esthetic without abandoning essentially Symbolist theatre.

Lugné-Poe's success at evoking the spirit of his plays in the audience is difficult to measure objectively. The novelty of the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre's form of presentation, and the partisanship which often erupted among the audience members, worked against the achievement of a communal experience. However, a number of reviewers of Oeuvre performances were clearly affected by them on the esthetic level. For example, Ferdinand Hérold called the Oeuvre's production of Le Chariot de terre cuite "un [drame] des plus beaux que, cette fois, l'Oeuvre a révélé à son public." Referring to a specific scene, he declared: "rien n'est plus émouvant que la scène où elle [Vasantasena] jettes ses parures dans le chariot de terre cuite, jouet du petit Rohasena, fils de Cârudatta, pour que l'enfant s'achète un chariot d'or."[3] Note that the terms in Hérold's description are of restrained beauty, which differs from, for example, the exaggerated sentimentalism of melodrama.

Thus one could justifiably assert that a Symbolist-inspired esthetic of the actor/audience relationship was not applied uniformly by Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre, but was applied consistently.

End Notes

[1]George Bernard Shaw, "Peer Gynt in Paris," Dramatic Opinions and Essays, 2 vols. (New York: Bentano's, 1928), 2: 104, 103.

[2]A. Ferdinand Hérold, Le Mercure de France 13 (March 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 352, 353.

Works Cited

Primary Sources

Lugné-Poe's Writings

Lugné-Poe, Aurélien. "A Propos de 'L'Inutilité du théâtre au théâtre'." Le Mercure de France 20 (October 1896; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 90-99.

_____. "Ibsen et son public." La Revue bleue, ser. 5, 2 (July 1904): 97-102.

_____. La Parade: Souvenirs et impressions de théâtre. 4th ed. 4 vols. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1930-34.

_____. "Souvenirs sur Henrik Ibsen." La Revue hebdomadaire. March 1928, pp. 395-418.

_____. "Sur les soirées de 'l'Oeuvre'." La Plume 4 (September 1893; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 379-80.

Reviews of Oeuvre Productions

Coolus, Romain. La Revue Blanche 11 (1896; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 524-27.

Danville, Gaston. Le Mercure de France 14 (April 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 98-99.

Fouquier, Henry. Le Figaro (Paris), 9 May 1895, p. 3; 13 November 1896, p. 4; 12 November 1897, p. 4; Paris: L'Association pour la conservation et la reproduction photographique de la presse (ACRPP), Gr Fo Lc 13 9, 1964.

Gachons, Jacques des. L'Ermitage 14 (1897; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 59-60.

Reviews of Oeuvre Productions (cont'd)

Gruyer, Paul. La Revue d'art dramatique 37 (1895; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971): 201-5.

Hérold, A. Ferdinand. Le Mercure de France 13 (March 1895; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 351-55.

_____. Le Mercure de France 20 (December 1896; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 602-6.

Sarcey, Francisque. Quarante ans de théâtre. 8 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque des Annales Politiques et Littéraires, 1900-1902.

Shaw, George Bernard. Dramatic Opinions and Essays. 2 vols. New York: Bentano's 1928.

Vallette, Alfred. Le Mercure de France 9 (November 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 275-78.

On Symbolist Dramatic Theory

Maeterlinck, Maurice. Le Trésor des Humbles. Paris: Le Mercure de France, 1924.

Mallarmé, Stéphane. Oeuvres complètes. Edited and annotated by Henri Mondor and G.-Jean Aubrey. Paris: Librairie Gallimard, 1945.

Mauclair, Camille. "Notes sur une dramaturgie symbolique." La Revue indépendante 22 (March 1892): 305-17.

_____. Le Mercure de France 9 (October 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 191-92.

Morice, Charles. "A Propos du Théâtre d'Art." Le Mercure de France 7 (March 1893; reprint ed., Vaduz: Kraus Reprint Ltd., 1965): 249-53.

Quillard, Pierre. "De l'Inutilité absolue de la mise en scène exacte." La Revue d'art dramatique 22 (May 1891; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1971): 180-83.

On Related Theories

Antoine, André. "Causérie sur la mise en Scène." La Revue de Paris 11 (April 1903): 596-612.

Baudelaire, Charles. "Expositions universelles de 1855, Beaux-Arts." Écrits esthétiques. Preface by Jean-Christophe Bailly. Paris: Union générale d'Editions, 1896, pp. 243-67.

Denis, Maurice. Théories, 1890-1910. Du Symbolisme et de Gauguin vers un nouvel ordre classique. 4th ed. Paris: L. Rouart et J. Watelin, 1920.

Hugo, Victor. Preface to Cromwell. Paris: Librairie Alphonse Lemerre, 1951, pp. 5-67.

Wagner, Richard. Richard Wagner's Prose Works. Translated by William Ashton Ellis. 8 vols. Vol 5: Actors and Singers. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul Ltd., 1892-1898; reprint ed., New York: Broude Brothers, 1966.

Zola, Émile. Oeuvres complètes illustrées d'Émile Zola. 19 vols. Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1906.

Play Editions

Ibsen, Henrik. Peer Gynt. Translated by M. Prozor. Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin et cie., 1912.

_____. Rosmersholm. Translated by M. Prozor. Paris: Librairie Académique Perrin et cie., 1904.

Maeterlinck, Maurice. Intérieur. In Théâtre. 3 vols. (Paris: Bibliothèque-Charpentier, 1904), 2: 233-65.

Shudraka. The Toy Cart. In Great Sanskrit Plays in New English Transcreations. Translated by P. Lal. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1964.

Illustrations

Boyle-Turner, Caroline. Paul Sérusier. Ann Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Research Press, 1983.

Illustrations (cont'd)

Couperie, Pierre. Paris au fil du temps: atlas historique d'urbanisme et d'architecture. Éditions Joël Cuénot, 1968.

Dort, Bernard and Ubersfeld, Anne. Le Texte et la scène: Études sur l'espace et l'acteur. Paris: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1978.

La Plume 4 (December 1893; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1968): 530.

Secondary Sources

On Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre

Jasper, Gertrude Rathbone. Adventure in the Theatre: Lugné-Poe and the Théâtre de l'Oeuvre to 1899. New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1947.

Reque, A. Dikka. Trois auteurs dramatiques Scandinaves: Ibsen, Bjornson, Strindberg devant la critique Française 1889-1901. Paris: Librairie Ancienne Honoré Champion, 1930; reprint ed., Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1976.

Robichez, Jacques. Lugné-Poe. Paris: L'Arche, 1955.

_____. Le Symbolisme au théâtre: Lugné-Poe et les débuts de l'Oeuvre. Paris: L'Arche, 1957.

On Symbolist Dramatic Theory

Block, Haskell M. Mallarmé and the Symbolist Drama. Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1963.

Knowles, Dorothy. La Réaction idéaliste au théâtre depuis 1890. Paris: E. Droz, 1934.

Régnier, Henri de. "Mallarme au théâtre." Journal des débats 7 (September 1908): 1-2.

On Related Theories

Bhat, G. K. Theatric Aspects of Sanskrit Drama. Poona, India: Bhundharkar Oriental Research Institute, 1983.

Brockett, Oscar G. Historical Edition. The Theatre: An Introduction. New York: Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1979.

Lal, P. Great Sanskrit Plays in New English Transcreations. Norfolk, Conn.: New Directions Books, 1964.

Meyer, Michael. Introduction to Peer Gynt, by Henrik Ibsen. Translated by Michael Meyer. New York: Doubleday and Co., 1963, pp. 11-23.

_____. Introduction to Rosmersholm, by Henrik Ibsen. Translated by Michael Meyer. London: Rupert Hart-Davis, 1966, pp. 7-28.

Appendix A: Programs of the Oeuvre, 1893-97*

October 6, 1893 — Bouffes du Nord

Rosmersholm, drame en quatre actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Count Prozor.

November 8, 1893 — Bouffes du Nord

An Enemy of the People (Un Ennemi du peuple), drame en cinq actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Ad. Chennevière and H. Johansen.

December 13, 1893 — Bouffes du Nord

Ames solitaires, pièce en cinq actes, by Gerhart Hauptmann, translated by Alexandre Cohen.

February 13, 1894 — Bouffes du Nord

L'Araignée de cristal, un acte en prose, by Mme Rachilde.

Beyond Human Power, Part 1 (Au-dessus des forces humaines, 1ère partie), pièce en deux actes, by Björnstjerne-Björnson, translated by Count Prozor.

February 27, 1894 — Bouffes du Nord

Une Nuit d'avril à Céos, un acte en prose, by Gabriel Trarieux.

L'Image, pièce en trois actes, by Maurice Beaubourg.

April 3, 1894 — Bouffes du Nord

The Master Builder (Solness le constructeur), drame en trois actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Count Prozor.

May 24, 1894 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Belle au Bois dormant, féerie dramatique en trois actes, by Henri Bataille and Robert d'Humières.

June 21, 1894 — Comédie-Parisienne

Frères, drame en un acte, by Herman Bang, translated by Viscount de Colleville and Fritz de Zepelin.

La Gardienne, poème, by Henri de Régnier.

Creditors (Créanciers), tragédie-comédie en un acte et en prose, by August Strindberg, translated by Georges Loiseau.

November 6, 1894 — Nouveau-Théâtre

'Tis Pity She's a Whore (Annabella), drame en cinq actes, by John Ford, translated by Maurice Maeterlinck.

November 27, 1894 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Vie muette, drame en quatre actes, by Maurice Beaubourg.

December 13, 1894 — Nouveau-Théâtre

The Father (Père), tragédie en trois actes, by August Strindberg, translated by Georges Loiseau.

December 26, 1894 — Nouveau-Théâtre

An Enemy of the People (Un Ennemi du peuple), drame en cinq actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Ad. Chennevière and H. Johansen.

January 22, 1895 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Le Chariot de terre cuite, pièce en cinq actes, adapted by Victor Barrucand from the Sanskrit drama, Mric'chakatika, attributed to Shudraka.

March 15, 1895 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Scène, pièce en un acte, by André Lebey.

La Vérité dans le vin ou les Désagréments de la galanterie, comédie en un acte, by Charles Collé.

Intérieur, drame en un acte, by Maurice Maeterlinck.

Les Pieds nickelés, comédie en un acte, by Tristan Bernard.

May 8, 1895 — Menus-Plaisirs

L'École de l'idéal, pièce en trois actes et en vers, by Paul Vérola.

Little Eyolf (Le Petit Eyolf), pièce en trois actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Count Prozor.

May 28, 1895 — Menus-Plaisirs

Le Volant, pièce en trois actes, by Judith Cladel.

June 22, 1895 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Brand, pièce en cinq actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Count Prozor.

November 8, 1895 — Comédie-Parisienne

Venice Preserv'd (Venise sauvée), pièce en cinq actes, by Thomas Otway, translated by Gyl Pène.

December 16, 1895 — Comédie-Parisienne

L'Anneau de Çakuntala, comédie héroïque en cinq actes et en sept tableaux, by Kalidasa, adapted from the Hindu play by A. Ferdinand Hérold.

January 6, 1896 — Comédie-Parisienne

Une Mère, drame en trois actes, by Ellin Ameen, translated by Count Prozor.

Brocéliande, un acte en vers, by Jean Lorrain.

Les Flaireurs, symbole en trois actes, by Charles van Lerberghe.

Des mots! des mots!, un acte en vers, by Charles Quinel and René Dubreuil.

February 11, 1896 — Comédie-Parisienne

Raphael, pièce en trois actes, by Romain Coolus.

Salomé, drame en un acte, by Oscar Wilde.

March 17, 1896 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Hérakléa, drame en vers en trois actes, by Auguste Villeroy.

April 22, 1896 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Fleur Palan enlevée, un acte, adapted from the Chinese by Jules Arène.

L'Errante, poème dramatique, by Pierre Quillard.

La Dernière Croisade, comédie en trois actes, by Maxime Gray.

May 6, 1896 — Comédie-Parisienne

La Lépreuse, tragédie légendaire en trois actes, by Henry Bataille.

May 29, 1896 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Le Tandem, comédie en deux actes, by Léo Trézenik and Pierre Soulaine.

La Brebis, comédie en deux actes, by Edmond Sée.

June 17, 1896 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Pillars of Society (Les Soutiens de la société), pièce en quatre actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by P. Bertrand and Ern. de Nevers.

November 12, 1896 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Peer Gynt, poème dramatique en cinq actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Count Prozor.

December 10, 1896

Ubu roi ou les Polonais, drame en cinq actes en prose, by Alfred Jarry.

January 16, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Motte de terre, un acte by Louis Dumur.

Beyond Human Power, Part I (Au delà des forces humaines, 1ère partie), pièce en quatre actes, by Björnstjerne-Björnson, translated by Count Prozor.

January 26, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Beyond Human Power, Part II (Au delà des forces humaines, 2e partie), pièce en quatre actes, by Björnstjerne-Björnson, translated by Auguste Monnier and Littmanson.

March 5, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

La Cloche engloutie, conte dramatique en cinq actes, by Gerhart Hauptmann, translated by A. Ferdinand Hérold.

May 8, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Ton Sang, tragédie contemporaine en quatre actes, by Henry Bataille.

May 15, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Le Fils de l'abbesse, thèse en trois actes et quatre tableaux, by Ambroise Herdey.

Le Fardeau de la liberté, comédie en un acte, by Tristan Bernard.

June 23, 1897 — Nouveau-Théâtre

Love's Comedy (La Comédie de l'amour), pièce en trois actes, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Viscount de Colleville and Fritz de Zepelin.

* From Gertrude Jasper, Adventure in the Theatre, and Jacques Robichez, Le Symbolisme au théâtre (see "Works Cited: Secondary Sources", p.95).

Appendix B: Figures and Plates

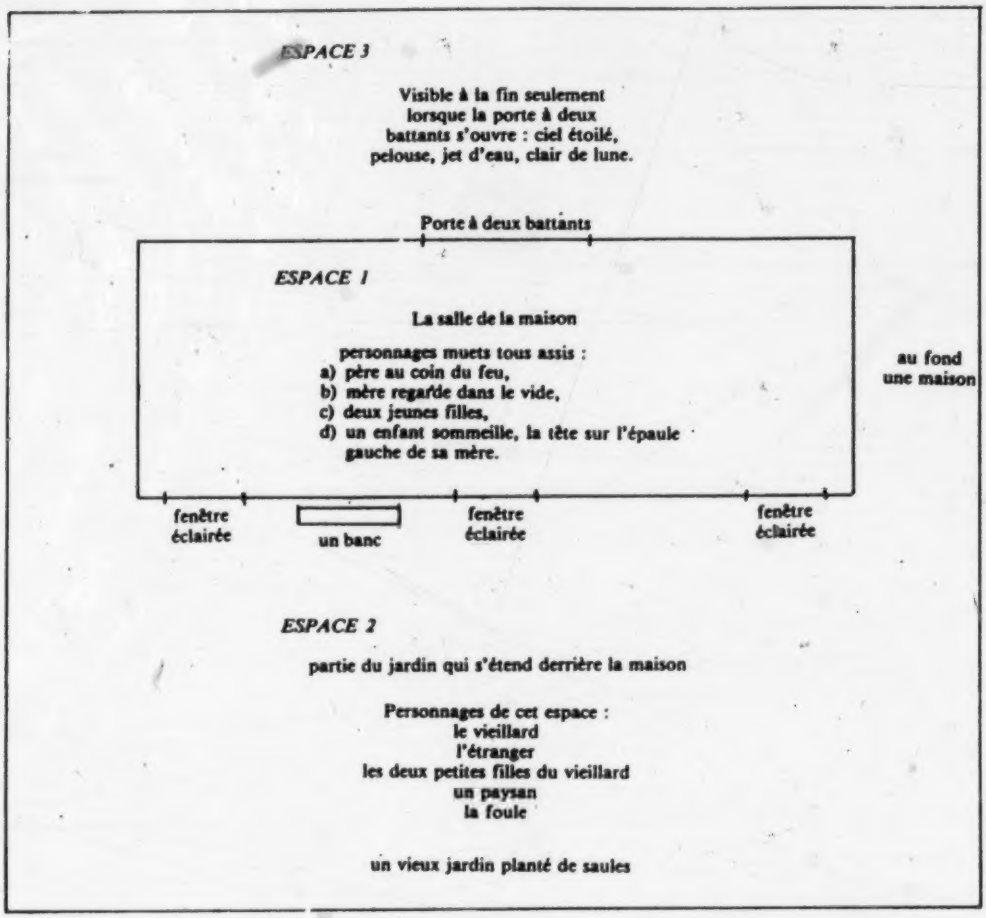

Figure 1.

Playing-spaces in Intérieur, by Maurice Maeterlinck.

From La Texte et la scène: études sur l'espace et l'acteur, sous la direction de Bernard Dort et Anne Ubersfeid. Paris: Imprimerie F. Paillart, 1978.

Page 103. Lugné-Poe's costume as John Rosmer in Rosmersholm.

From La Plume 4 (December 1893): 530.

Copyright permission to reproduce this illustration was unavailable.

Page 104. Location of theatres for performances of representative plays.

From Pierre Couperie. Paris au fil du temps: atlas historique d'urbanisme et d'architecture. Editions Joël Cuénot, 1968.

Copyright permission to reproduce this illustration was unavailable.

Page 105. Paul Sérusier, program for L'Intruse by Maurice Maeterlinck, 1891 at the Théâtre d'Art.

From Caroline Boyle-Turner. Paul Sérusier. Anne Arbor, Mi.: University of Michigan Research Press, 1983.

Copyright permission to reproduce this illustration was unavailable.